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DATE AND PROVENANCE OF THE SYRIAC *CAVE OF TREASURES*: A REAPPRAISAL[1]

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ABSTRACT

The original Syriac composition known as the Cave of Treasures, ascribed to Ephrem the Syrian, presents a peculiar account of Christian sacred history. Due to its idiosyncratic nature, it is not easy to situate this pseudepigraphic work within the multifaceted world of Syriac Christianity of Late Antiquity. This paper carries out a reexamination of some scholarly assumptions about the date and milieu of this work and offers new arguments that may help us to contextualize it with greater certainty. It is argued that the Cave was composed, most likely, during the period between the middle of the sixth century and the first decades of the seventh century. As for the work's provenance, it is proposed that it was authored by a West-Syrian writer, who lived in the Sasanian-controlled part of Northern Mesopotamia.

The original Syriac composition known as the *Cave of Treasures* (hereafter referred to as CT) is a representative of the loosely

[1] I am grateful to the anonymous readers for their valuable remarks and to J. Edward Walters for correcting my English.

defined genre of "rewritten Bible".[2] This text, which was circulated as a work of Ephrem the Syrian, presents a peculiar account of Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, in which the narratives of the Old and New Testaments are creatively merged into a new cohesive narrative that begins with the creation of the world and ends with Pentecost. This new version of the sacred history features a number of remarkable innovations that are not found in the canonical narratives and that serve the particular agenda of its author.

Through careful reworking of the canonical version of the biblical past, the author of CT strives to forge and promote a distinctive version of Christian identity, tailored specifically to the needs of his Syriac-speaking community. There are several major lines along which he rewrites the biblical narrative to achieve this purpose. One of them is a strong anti-Jewish bias that characterizes the composition as a whole. A second important aspect of the reshaping of biblical material by the author of CT is his close engagement with Iranian culture. The two main avenues of its expression are polemic against Zoroastrianism and creative appropriation of several Iranian themes and images. Another line of interest finds its expression in the great emphasis placed by the author on specifically Syriac themes and images.[3]

Due to the idiosyncratic nature of CT, it is not an easy task to situate this composition within the variegated world of the Syriac-speaking Christianity of Late Antiquity. Whereas most scholars agree in rejecting Ephremian authorship for this work, there is still no consensus as to when and by whom it was produced. In what follows I would like to contribute to the clarification of this question, carrying out a reexamination of some scholarly assumptions about the date and milieu of CT and offering new arguments that may help us to contextualize it with a greater certainty.

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[2] For general information on CT, see VAN ROMPAY 1996, pp. 629-631. For a critical edition, see RI 1987. In what follows, the Syriac text of CT is quoted according to this edition.

[3] These aspects of CT are analyzed in MINOV 2013a.

1. The Date of CT

Since the last decades of the nineteenth century when the original Syriac text of CT was made available to European scholars by Carl Bezold, a number of opinions on the date of this work have been expressed. In his edition, Bezold suggested the sixth century as the time of the work's composition, although without bringing any detailed argumentation to substantiate this claim.[4] His teacher, Theodor Nöldeke, in a review of Bezold's edition accepts his opinion.[5] This date has been supported also by E. A. Wallis Budge, who in the preface to his English translation of CT notes that "it is now generally believed that the form in which we now have it is not older than the VIth century".[6] The authors of the two most influential handbooks of Syriac literature, Rubens Duval and Anton Baumstark, also date CT to the sixth century.[7]

One of the first attempts to argue for an earlier date of the composition for CT was made by Jacob Bamberger, who dated it to the fourth century on the basis of its supposed indebtedness to the Jewish Adam-literature and origins in "Ephrem's school".[8] Subsequently, Albrecht Götze, the first scholar who undertook a thorough examination of CT, suggested that an early version of this work, labeled by him the *Urschatzhöhle*, was composed around the middle of the fourth century in Jewish-Christian circles, while later on, during the sixth century, it was reworked by an East-Syrian editor.[9] Götze's main arguments for the fourth-century date of the *Urschatzhöhle* are the following: (a) closeness of the ideology of CT to Gnostics and Ebionites; (b) dependence of CT's chronology on that of Julius Africanus; (c) influence of Aphrahat on CT; and (d) Ephrem's ignorance of this work.

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[4] See Bezold 1883-1888, v. 1, p. x.
[5] See Nöldeke 1888.
[6] Budge 1927, p. xi.
[7] See Duval 1907, p. 81; Baumstark 1922, p. 95.
[8] See Bamberger 1901, p. 25.
[9] See Götze 1922, p. 91.

This theory enjoyed considerable popularity. Thus, for example, in his overview of Jewish apocryphal literature, Albert-Marie Denis claims that the core of CT existed in the fourth century as a polemical anti-Jewish work produced by Jewish-Christians.[10]

The hypothesis of Götze has been adopted and further developed by Su-Min Ri, who, in a number of publications, proposed that the core of CT was composed in the third century. In the preface to the French translation of CT, Ri suggested that CT fits the context of "interfaith" discussion in third-century Caesarea Maritima, when Origen lived and taught there.[11] Later on, in an article dealing with the parallels between CT and Ephrem's writings, Ri came to the conclusion that the latter was dependent on the former and knew it "par cœur," even before he became Christian. Support for this bold claim is found by Ri in the supposed connection between CT and such early Christian writers as Irenaeus of Lyon, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Julius Africanus, and Hippolytus.[12] That would point to an even earlier date of the text than Götze's suggested date of ca. 350. Ri holds on to this date in his most recent monograph on CT, where he gives the end of the second/beginning of the third century as the time of the work's composition.[13] Ri's theory of the early origins of CT gained a certain popularity among Syriacists.[14]

Ri's theory has been challenged recently by Clemens Leonhard, who exposed the weakness of the arguments in favor of an early dating of CT.[15] Leonhard has convincingly demonstrated that CT should be read as a coherent literary whole and that no distinct textual layer such as the *Urschatzhöhle* of Götze can be securely distinguished within it.[16] He has also

[10] See DENIS 2000, v. 1, p. 31.
[11] See RI 1987, v. 2, pp. xxii-xxiii.
[12] See RI 1998, pp. 82-83.
[13] See RI 2000, pp. 555-557.
[14] Cf. TUBACH 2003, pp. 193-194; WITAKOWSKI 2008, p. 815.
[15] See LEONHARD 2001.
[16] LEONHARD 2001, pp. 261-277.

examined from a diachronic point of view several important themes that appear in CT, such as the traditions concerning the burial of Adam on Golgotha and the death and burial place of the prophet Jeremiah, as well as the use of the Peshitta text of the New Testament, the millennial concept, the influence of the cult of relics, and the importance of a Syriac identity.[17] As a result, Leonhard comes to the conclusion that CT could not be composed before the fourth century and that the most likely date of its composition is the fifth or sixth century.

Finding the arguments brought forward by Leonhard against the theory of early origins of CT proposed by Götze and Ri fully convincing, I am not going to address them here and will take his suggestion of the fifth-sixth century as the probable date of the work's composition as the initial working hypothesis for my own investigation. In what follows I attempt to establish, with even greater certainty, a possible *terminus ante quem* and *post quem* for this work.

1.1. *Terminus ante quem*

The literary source that provides us with the most secure *terminus ante quem* for CT is another pseudepigraphic composition, the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. This apocalyptic work was written in Syriac soon after the Arab conquest of Northern Mesopotamia, around the year 690 or 691, somewhere in the vicinity of Sinğār, a region about 100 kilometers southeast of Nisibis.[18]

There are several instances when the *Apocalypse* exhibits closeness to or acquaintance with CT. For instance, this work shares with CT the overall chronological scheme of *septimana mundi*.[19] Another example of this kind appears in the section

[17] LEONHARD 2001, pp. 277-288.

[18] For the critical edition of the *Apocalypse*, see REININK 1993. On the *Apocalypse*'s date and provenance, see BROCK 1982a, pp. 18-19; REININK 1993, v. 2, pp. v-xxix.

[19] See GÖTZE 1923-1924, #2, pp. 52-53; REININK 1993, v. 2, pp. vi-vii. For more information on this concept in CT, see LEONHARD 2001, pp. 285-287.

dealing with the abdication of the eschatological Last Emperor on Golgotha (*Apoc.* IX.8-X.2), where the author interprets the term "middle" (ܡܨܥܝܬܐ) of 2 Thessalonians 2:7 in light of the notion of the "middle of the earth" (ܡܨܥܝܬ ܐܪܥܐ ܕܓܓܘܠܬܐ), which is identified as Golgotha and Jerusalem, an interpretation found in CT XLIX.2-3.[20] However, the most striking instance of CT's influence upon the *Apocalypse* is the story of Yonṭon, the fourth son of Noah born after the flood, who is portrayed as the inventor of astronomy and the teacher of Nimrod. This peculiar tradition, which appears for the first time in CT (XXVII.6-20), is also used by the author of the *Apocalypse* (III.2-8).[21] These examples of the *Apocalypse* author's acquaintance with CT give us the year 690 as a *terminus ante quem* for our work.

There is another source that supports the evidence of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* and allows us to push the date of CT's composition even further back: the anonymous Syriac cosmological treatise ascribed to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. This work, preserved in a single Syriac manuscript–British Library Add. 7192, ff. 57c-65b–was published for the first time by Marc-Antoine Kugener.[22] Josiah Forshall and Friedrich Rosen, who first described the manuscript, dated it to the tenth century.[23] Later on, however, this opinion was challenged by William Wright, who dated it to the seventh or eighth century.[24] As for the date of the Pseudo-Dionysian work itself, Kugener dates its composition to the sixth century.[25]

This composition deals with a number of topics related to science, primarily cosmological and astronomical matters. In order to avoid confusion, it should be underscored that it does

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[20] See on this REININK 1992, pp. 176-177.

[21] On this tradition, see GERO 1980; TOEPEL 2006b.

[22] KUGENER 1907. Soon after that, it has been republished by FURLANI 1917.

[23] FORSHALL & ROSEN 1838, #51, pp. 83-84.

[24] WRIGHT 1870-1872, v. 3, p. 1206, #51.

[25] See KUGENER 1907, pp. 140-141.

not belong to the genuine Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, i.e. the four tractates and ten letters that were composed originally in Greek at the end of the fifth century. This work is an original Syriac composition, which represents a later stage in the development of the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition that took place in the Syriac-speaking environment, probably not earlier than the first decades of the sixth century, when the first Syriac translations of Pseudo-Dionysius began to circulate due to the efforts of Sergius of Reshaina († 536).[26]

This text has several features in common with CT. Both works exhibit interest in the science of astronomy and wage a polemic against astrology.[27] In the cosmological systems of both, the earth is described as being perforated by the system of underground "channels" (ܡܫܟܐ) that serve for the passage of waters as well as of hot and cold air, and describe the lower part of the earth that rests on waters as having the structure of a "sponge" (ܣܦܓܐ).[28] Even more striking is the fact that the notion of a mythological figure of the Iranian pantheon such as Rapithwin, the "spirit of mid-day," appears only in these two texts.[29]

The most significant parallel between the two works is that the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate contains an apocryphal account of the Magi in a form very similar to that of CT. While discussing the star named "Keywan" (ܟܝܘܢ), i.e. Saturn, the author identifies it with the nameless star that guided the Magi according to Matthew 2:1-10 in the following terms:

> It is this star that the Magi saw at the glorious mountain, where these offerings – gold, myrrh, and frankincense – were placed; and this cave had been called the "cave of treasures". And

[26] On Syriac translations of the authentic Pseudo-Dionysian writings, see SHERWOOD 1952; HORNUS 1970.

[27] Cf. CT XXVII.17-20 and KUGENER 1907, pp. 187-193.

[28] Cf. CT I.15-16 and KUGENER 1907, pp. 153 [Syr.], 177 [tr.].

[29] Cf. CT I.9 and KUGENER 1907, pp. 155 [Syr.], 181 [tr.]. For a detailed analysis of this tradition, see MINOV 2014, pp. 153-165.

> this star was their guide, when they went up from Persia.[30]

Not only does the general outline of this story about the gifts brought by the Magi to Jesus resemble that of the account of the Magi in CT (cf. CT XLV-XLVI), but the author of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate even uses identical vocabulary, such as the "splendid mountain" (ܛܘܪܐ ܝܩܝܪܬܐ), [31] the "cave of treasures" (ܡܥܪܬ ܐܘܨܪ̈ܐ), and the star as the "guide" (ܡܕܒܪ).[32]

All this suggests that both the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate and CT stem from the same cultural milieu in which similar cosmological and astronomical ideas were in circulation. It is not easy to establish with a sufficient degree of certainty the nature of the literary relations between these two works. According to Sebastian Brock, who points at the verbatim agreement between them in the description of the underground channels, it was the author of CT who made use of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate.[33] In my opinion, however, it would be more logical to explain this stock of common vocabulary and motifs by suggesting that literary dependence went in the opposite direction, i.e. that it was the author of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate who relied on CT. The Pseudo-Dionysian author uses the story of the Magi, which does not play an important role in his work, to point to certain cosmological issues, but that same story is an integral element of the narrative of CT. Taking into consideration Kugener's suggestion about sixth-century date of the Pseudo-Dionysian text, one is able to push the date of CT's composition back a little further, to the middle of the sixth century.

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[30] ܗܘ ܟܘܟܒܐ ܕܗܘ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܡܕܒܪ ܟܕ ܣܠܩܘ ܡܢ ܦܪܣ̈ܐ; ed. KUGENER 1907, p. 161 [Syr.].

[31] Cf. CT XIV.1 Or^{A} – ܛܘܪܐ ܝܩܝܪܬܐ.

[32] Cf. CT XLVI.5.

[33] See BROCK 2008, pp. 555-556.

One might add to these two literary sources the story, found in CT XXVII.4-5, that recounts the founding of a Zoroastrian fire-temple in Azerbaijan by the king Sasan.[34] This account apparently refers to Ādur Gušnasp, the most famous Sasanian cultic center, known today as the archaeological site Takht-i Sulaimān in West Azerbaijan, Iran. What seems to be relevant for our discussion of CT's date is that this temple was sacked and destroyed by Byzantine troops under the command of the Emperor Heraclius in the year 623 during his Persian campaign. It is noteworthy that in CT's description of the Zoroastrian sanctuary this dramatic event is not reflected at all. This fact seems to suggest that our author wrote before the destruction of the temple of Ādur Gušnasp by Heraclius and, thus, provides us with the second decade of the seventh century as the *terminus ante quem* for his work.

Taking into consideration all this evidence, as well as significant use of Iranian ideas and images by the author of CT,[35] and the absence from CT of any references to the Arabic conquest, Islam or the Arabs in general, it seems reasonable to date this work to the pre-Islamic period and to propose the first two decades of the seventh century as the *terminus ante quem* for it.

1.2. *Terminus post quem*

To establish a secure *terminus post quem* for CT presents a greater challenge. The main obstacle is the peculiar manner of the style of its author, who, while making use of a wide range of sources, reworks them in such a thorough way that any traces of his indebtedness to the previous writers are erased. In my opinion, it is not an accidental feature of CT, but a consciously chosen and consistently pursued literary strategy of the author of this work. Nevertheless, there are some hints that may help us.

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[34] For a detailed analysis of this tradition, see MINOV 2013a, pp. 208-219.

[35] See on this MINOV 2013a, Chapter 4.

First, the of the name of the Sasanian monarch Pērōz in CT points to a relatively late date for its composition. In CT XLV.19, where the story of the three Magi that came to worship the infant Jesus is related, one of them is named after this monarch. While the form of his name varies in different manuscripts – Or^{M} ܦܝܪܘܙ, Or^{AELOPSUV} ܦܝܪܘܙ, Or^{BCD} ܦܝܪܘ, Or^{H} ܦܝܪܘܙ, Oc^{a} ܦܝܪܘܙ, Oc^{d} ܦܝܪܘܙ – its derivation from the name Pērōz can hardly be doubted, especially if we take into consideration that the names of two other Magi are also derived from the names of Sasanian kings: Yazdegerd and Hormizd. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to accept the suggestion made by Witold Witakowski that the rule of Pērōz (459-484) might serve as a *terminus post quem* for this tradition.[36] Thus, based on these considerations, Philip Wood has suggested that CT was composed "within a generation of the reign of Peroz, i.e. ca. 480–520".[37]

Another detail that points to a later date for CT is the mention of the "tunic" (ܟܘܬܢܐ) of Christ.[38] According to CT L.8-12, this precious relic that would bring down rain during times of drought was originally in possession of an unnamed soldier, from whom it was taken over by Pilate and sent to the emperor Tiberius. The earliest mention of this relic comes from a Christian Arabic source: a letter supposedly sent by the *comes* Dorotheus, who was the ruler of Palaestina Secunda during the years 452-453, to Marcel and Mari, two archimandrites from "the village of Ḥasā," otherwise unknown.[39] This work contains a story about the relic of Jesus' "garment" (كساء), which he wore at the time of his crucifixion, being recovered in Jerusalem from the local Jews in the year 450.[40] According to Michel van Esbroeck, the publisher of this

[36] WITAKOWSKI 2008, pp. 815-816.

[37] WOOD 2010, p. 118.

[38] For the Scriptural reference to this object, see John 19:23-24.

[39] The Arabic text together with French translation was published by VAN ESBROECK 1986, pp. 156-159. Van Esbroeck suggests that the letter was translated into Arabic from Syriac.

[40] More on this story, see LIMOR 1996, pp. 65-66.

text, its original was composed during the second half of the fifth century. In a later article, where van Esbroeck traces the development of the legend about the tunic of Christ, he argues that it was put into circulation in Byzantine Palestine during the last two decades of the fifth century.[41] To that it might be added that it was only during the sixth century that the notion of this miraculous relic became widely disseminated through the Christian world. Thus, it was known in the sixth-century Latin West as one can see from the testimony of Gregory of Tours.[42] Among the Syriac-speaking Christians familiar with the tunic's story, one might mention Aḥob of Qaṭar, a sixth-century East-Syrian writer, whose scholia on the Gospel of John survived in the Gəʿəz translation of Ibn al-Ṭayyib's *Commentary on John*.[43] It is also remarkable that Jacob of Serug devotes considerable space to the tunic, its origins and symbolism (though not to its afterlife) in one of his poems dealing with the Passion narrative.[44] Taken together, these observations provide us with the last two decades of the fifth century as another *terminus post quem* for CT.

Additional support for such a relatively late *terminus post quem* for CT is provided in an article by Clemens Leonhard, in which he examines closely the pericope dealing with the sacrifice of Isaac (CT XXIX.8-14).[45] Having compared the textual evidence for this passage available in Ri's edition, Leonhard has convincingly argued in favor of the primacy of the manuscript Or^{F} from the Eastern recension as "der älteste

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[41] See VAN ESBROECK 1994, pp. 233-242. Unfortunately, the author does not take into consideration the version of the tunic's legend found in CT.

[42] Cf. *In gloria martyrum* I.7.

[43] Cf. the scholion on John 19:16-42 – "Agob says that his garment was not precious until the soldiers drew lots for it; but when they saw it performing miracles, they caught it and took it up as a way of blessing for them, and it became a help for them in time of danger"; tr. *apud* COWLEY 1980, p. 337.

[44] *Prose Homily on the Friday of the Passion* §§18-26; ed. RILLIET 1986, pp. 618-624.

[45] See LEONHARD 2004.

erreichbare Text" over the rest of CT's textual witnesses. Even more significantly, he draws attention to a rather peculiar tradition about Jesus' circumcision that appears in Or^F in CT XXIX.11. I shall quote it here in full:

> However, when Christ was eight days old, Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, rose up to circumcise him in accordance with the Law. And he circumcised him according to the Law. However, nothing has been cut off from him according to humanity, but as when a sharp sword that passes through the rays of light or through the light of a lamp indeed cuts it and passes (through it), while the light is not harmed at all and the ray of light is not cut off, (likewise) Christ performed the duty of circumcision, while (his) body was not harmed and the iron took away nothing by cutting him.[46]

The fact that this peculiar tradition is attested in only one textual witness of CT XXIX.11, i.e. Or^F, cannot be used to discard it as a secondary inclusion, since the same imagery appears again later in the text (in CT XLVI.16-18), and this time it is included in all manuscripts of the Eastern recension, including Or^A. The circumcision of Jesus on the eighth day is described there in the following way:

> In truth, Joseph circumcised him according to the Law. But he performed the circumcision, although nothing has been cut off from him. For like iron that passes through and cuts the rays of light, while cutting off

[46] Or^F – ܗܘ ܕ ܡܛܠ ܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܬ ܝܘܡ ܫܡܝܢ ܐܬܐ ܝܘܣܦ ܕ ܐܠ ܠ ܡܪܝܡ ܐ ܠ ܡܗܘ ܕ ܐ ܠ ܡܗ ܕ ܐ ܠ ܡ ܗ ܕ ܐ ܠ ܡ ܗ ܕ ܐ ܠ ܡ

> nothing, so likewise Christ was circumcised, while nothing was cut off from him.[47]

It has been suggested by Leonhard that this unusual depiction of Jesus' circumcision reflects a Christological position that was characteristic for one particular group within the broad spectrum of sixth-century Christianity – that of the so-called "Aphthartodocetes" or "Phantasiasts".[48] This radical strand within the Miaphysite movement was characterized by adherence to the ideas of Julian of Halicarnassus regarding the original incorruptibility of Christ's body.[49] Leonhard bases his argument on one of the pastoral letters of Severus of Antioch written during the patriarch's exile in Egypt, in which Severus addresses the problem of the fate of the prepuce of Jesus after his circumcision in order to provide an answer to the claim of certain "Phantasiasts" (ܕܡܦܐܢܛܣܝܐ), who deny that Christ was "circumcised in reality" (ܥܡ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܒܫܪܝܪܘܬܐ).[50]

While, generally speaking, this suggestion leads us in the right direction, it is in need of correction and refinement. The main problem with Leonhard's thesis is that although in Greek and Syriac sources the label "Phantasiast" was often applied to Julian and his followers, it had, in fact, a wider range of meanings; so, it is by no means certain that Severus intended this meaning in this letter. First of all, it should be noted that it seems very unlikely that such a view of Jesus' circumcision was held by Julian himself. No discussion of Jesus' circumcision is found in the surviving fragments of Julian.[51] Even more significant is that neither in this letter nor in the voluminous polemical writings against Julian does Severus ascribe this

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[47] Or^{A} – ܟܕ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܒܫܪܝܪܘܬܐ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܒܬܪ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܬܩܛܥ ܡܢܝܗ. ܐܦ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܒܬܪ ܡܕܡ ܕܐܬܩܛܥ ܡܢܝܗ ܒܟܠ

opinion to his opponent. Concerning Julian himself, there are enough reasons to suggest that he would oppose such interpretation of Jesus' circumcision. One might infer this from a testimony of Severus, who refers to a section of Julian's *Apology* where Julian speaks against "the Manicheans and the phantasia of the Eutychians".[52] It is the second part of this sentence that deserves our attention.

The term "Phantasiast" as a pejorative label for the partisans of the extreme Christological views within the Miaphysite camp was in use well before the beginning of Julianist controversy. It was applied mostly to those whose doctrines were generally, whether rightly or wrongly, associated with the name of Eutyches, the archimandrite of a monastery near Constantinople, who was condemned for his version of Monophysite Christology at the council of Constantinople in the year 448.[53] One of the earliest examples of the language of φαντασία being applied to the Christological views held by Eutyches and his followers is found in the writings of Leo the Great.[54] Slightly later, in the second half of the fifth century, Timothy Aelurus, the anti-Chalcedonian bishop of Alexandria, in a polemical letter aimed against Eutychians blames them for teaching the doctrines of "the heresy of Phantasiasts" (ܗܪܣܝܐ ܕܦܐܢܛܐܣܝܐ).[55] In the Syriac-speaking milieu we find this derogatory term used by Philoxenus of Mabbug, who in his tractate *On the Trinity and Incarnation* (which was written in the second decade of the sixth century, i.e. before the conflict between Severus and Julian started[56]) devotes a section to the polemic against "Phantasiasts" (ܦܐܢܛܐܣܝܐ), who are identified also as "Eutychians"

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[52] ܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܕܒܪ ܡܢ ܡܢܝܟܝܐ ܘܦܐܢܛܐܣܝܐ ܕܐܘܛܝܟܝ; ed. HESPEL 1969, p. 185 [Syr.]. Cf. Ibid., pp. 179-180 [Syr.].

[53] See on him DRAGUET 1931; BEVAN & GRAY 2008.

[54] Cf. Leo's letters preserved in the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, ed. SCHWARTZ & STRAUB 1914-1984, v. II.4, pp. 114, 160 – Christ's body as *phantasticam speciem*; p. 161 – *phantasmatici Christiani*.

[55] Ed. EBIED & WICKHAM 1970, pp. 345 [Syr.], 367 [tr.].

[56] On its date, see DE HALLEUX 1963, pp. 243-246.

(ܐܘܛܝܟܝܐ).[57] The anonymous Syriac writer who translated the *Chronicle* by Zacharias of Mytilene into Syriac in the late 560s calls Eutyches "Phantasiast" in the short summary of the chapters comprising the second book.[58] "Phantasiasts" are equated with "Eutychians" in a Miaphysite formula of abjuration composed for those who return from different heresies to the orthodox faith (i.e. the Severian Miaphysitism), which is preserved in a sixth century West-Syrian manuscript (BM Add. 12,156).[59] It is clear from these references that the derogatory label "Phantasiasts" was in use long before the Julianist controversy and was directed against the "Eutychian" wing of the Miaphysite movement. In view of all that, one has to consider seriously a possibility of the "Phantasiasts" in the letter of Severus to refer not to "Julianists," but to "Eutychians."

This possibility is strengthened further by some additional evidence about the controversy that developed around the issue of Jesus' circumcision among the Syriac-speaking Miaphysites. In the first decade of the sixth century Philoxenus of Mabbug, in his *Commentary on Luke*, wages a polemic against an interpretation of Luke 2:21 denying the reality of Jesus' circumcision that was embraced by some unidentified "blasphemers" (ܡܓܕܦܐ). Philoxenus describes the logic that caused his opponents to adopt this position as follows:

> If something had been cut off from his body in circumcision, they would have shown to us what became from that part of the flesh which had been torn out, by which, if it had been thrown into the earth and corrupted, would be made false that (word) of the prophet (in)

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[57] *De Trinitate et Incarnatione* II.1; ed. VASCHALDE 1907, pp. 41-42 [Syr.].

[58] ܡܫܬܠܡܢܘ ܡܫܬܘܕܥ ܥܡ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܛܝܣ ܐܢܘܢ ܕܐܦ; ed. BROOKS 1919-1924, v. 1 [Syr.], p. 105, ln. 12-14.

[59] ܠܡܢ ܐܝܣܛܝܣ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܡ ܐܝܬ ܐܦ ܐܝܣܛܝܣ ܕ; WRIGHT 1870-1872, v. 2, p. 643.

> which he said, "Thou wilt not give thy Holy (One) to see corruption" (Ps 16:10).[60]

Unfortunately, Philoxenus does not disclose who the champions of this doctrine are, noting only that "they utter things which are appropriate to the Manicheans, as they are reckoned by the church".[61] Their denial of the reality of Jesus' circumcision is meant to give an answer to the troubling question about the fate of his foreskin, in the same way as in the teaching of the "Phantasiasts" rebutted in Severus' letter. On the one hand, the language of "corruption" (ܫܚܬܐ) used by Philoxenus' opponents evokes the teaching of Julian on incorruptibility. However, given the fact that the *Commentary on Luke* was written around the year 505[62] and that the conflict between Julian and Severus started somewhat later (in the year 518, after their arrival to Egypt), it seems unlikely that in these passages Philoxenus is arguing against "Julianists," properly speaking.

Although the adversaries of Philoxenus in this passage are unnamed, the most likely solution is that they were "Eutychians." That this group posed a certain problem for Philoxenus might be seen from another passage in the same *Commentary on Luke*, where he also affirms the reality of Jesus' circumcision while waging a polemic against "the heretics who deny the corporeality of the Word and reject his genuine becoming," naming them explicitly as "Eutychians (ܐܘܛܝܟܝܐܢܣ), Marcionites, Valentinians and Manicheans".[63] It is noteworthy that while condemning these heretics, Philoxenus singles out those "who are near us and are with us

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[60] ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܐ ܬܬܠ ܚܣܝܕܟ ܠܡܚܙܐ ܫܚܬܐ ; ed. WATT 1978, fr. 39, pp. 39 [Syr.], 33-34 [tr.].

[61] ܘܗܠܝܢ ܕܡܬܚܙܝ ܠܢ ܡܢ ܡܠܝ ; ed. WATT 1978, fr. 39, pp. 39 [Syr.], 34 [tr.].

[62] See on this WATT 1978, pp. 13*-14* [tr.].

[63] Ed. WATT 1978, fr. 51, pp. 71-72 [Syr.], 61-62 [tr.].

and are considered sons of the common congregation and disciples of the faith".[64] It is hardly likely that in the sixth-century Syrian context such description would be applied to Gnostics or Manicheans. This rhetoric betrays an inner division in the Miaphysite community addressed by Philoxenus and, thus, is most likely aimed against its Eutychian faction.[65]

Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about these "Eutychians".[66] Only scarce information about them could be extracted from the works of their opponents. Besides Philoxenus, there are other testimonies about the presence of this group in Syria. In one of the *Cathedral Homilies* delivered in Antioch before his flight to Egypt, Severus polemicizes against those who profess "the φαντασία of Eutyches" (... ܕܐܘܛܝܟܝ ܕܦܐܢܛܐܣܝܐ).[67] We know also that this movement gained momentum in Egypt, because in the fifth century Timothy Aelurus and then later Severus of Antioch polemicized against some followers of Eutyches who were active in this region.[68]

Coming back to the argument of Leonhard, it is clear that the label "Phantasiast" was in use before the Julianist controversy and was applied to Julian and his followers by association with the heresy of Eutyches.[69] Accordingly, the radical Miaphysite interpretation of Jesus' circumcision that was opposed by Severus and Philoxenus should be better classified for the present moment not as "Julianist," but as "Eutychian". What is pertinent to our argument is that this peculiar tradition, which is identical with the depiction of Jesus' circumcision that we find in CT, is not attested before the first

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[64] ܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܠܟ ܕܫܘܬܦܐ ܕܟܠ ܫܘܬܦܐ ܕܒܪ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܬܠܡܝܕܐ ܕܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ; ed. WATT 1978, fr. 51, pp. 71 [Syr.], 61 [tr.].

[65] About Philoxenus' polemic against this group, see WATT 1978, p. 11* [tr.].

[66] See LEBON 1909, pp. 489-500.

[67] *Hom.* #101; ed. GUIDI 1929, p. 270.

[68] On Timothy's anti-Eutychian polemic, see GRILLMEIER & HAINTHALER 1996, pp. 18-23. For Severus, see *Contra additiones Juliani* 42; ed. HESPEL 1968, pp. 160 [Syr.], 135 [tr.].

[69] Cf. Ps.-Zacharias, *Chron.* IX.9; ed. BROOKS 1919-1924, v. 2, p. 101 [Syr.].

decade of the sixth century. Accordingly, the appearance of this doctrine in CT could well be used to argue in favor of the beginning of the sixth century as a *terminus post quem* for the composition.

There is another tradition used by the author of CT that supports the suggestion of the first decades of the sixth century as the *terminus post quem* for our work. It comes from CT XXXV.18-21, where we find the following account of the building activities of King Solomon:

> And when Solomon was passing the outskirts of the mountain of Seir, he found there the altars that Pirzaki, and Pirzami, and Yozdakar had built. These were they whom Nimrod the giant sent to Balaam, the priest of the mountain, because he heard that he was familiar with the signs of the Zodiac. And when they were passing the outskirts of the mountain of Seir, they built there altars to the sun. And when Solomon saw it, he built there Heliopolis, the city of the Sun.[70]

The story is attested in all manuscripts of CT and, thus, should be considered as part of the original work. It is quoted here according to the Western recension, because there are several reasons to think that it reflects more faithfully the legend's version as it appeared in the original text of CT. First of all, the Western recension and some Eastern manuscripts preserved the correct name of the city – "Heliopolis" (ܗܠܝܘܦܘܠܝܣ), while Or^{M} has "Hierapolis" (ܗܝܪܦܘܠܝܣ), which is an obvious mistake, since it does not fit the following etymological explanation – the "city of the sun" (ܡܕܝܢܬ ܫܡܫܐ)

[70] Oc^{a} – ܘܟܕ ܫܪܐ ܣܠܡܘܢ ܥܒܪ ܒܬܪ ܛܘܪܐ ܕܣܥܝܪ ܐܬܚܙܐ ܬܡܢ ܕܒܚܘ ܦܝܪܙܩܝ ܘܦܝܪܙܡܝ ܘܝܙܕܟܪ ܗܢܘܢ ܗܢ ܕܢܡܪܘܕ ܓܒܪܐ ܫܕܪ ܠܒܠܥܡ ܟܗܢܐ ܕܛܘܪܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܫܡܥ ܗܘ ܕܝܕܥ ܗܘ ܒܫܘܡܗ ܕܙܝܪܐ ܘܟܕ ܥܒܪ ܒܬܪ ܛܘܪܐ ܕܣܥܝܪ ܒܢܘ ܬܡܢ ܡܕܒܚܐ ܠܫܡܫܐ ܘܟܕ ܚܙܐ ܫܠܡܘܢ ܒܢܐ ܬܡܢ ܗܠܝܘܦܘܠܝܣ ܕܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܬ ܫܡܫܐ.

that appears in both recensions.[71] Similarly, the two envoys of the Eastern recension are clearly a result of corruption of the three envoys of the Western recension. Also, according to the Western recension, the three envoys sent by Nimrod built "altars" (ܐܓܠܬ), while in Or^{M} only one "altar" (ܐܓܠܬ ܚܕ) is mentioned. The plural form agrees better with the other version of this legend.

The earliest dated appearance of the tradition about the building activity of Solomon in Heliopolis-Baalbek comes from the two sixth century Syriac works – the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene* (VIII.4)[72] and the *History* of John of Ephesus as preserved in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Book 3).[73] The crucial element that allows us to regard CT XXXV.18-21 as another variant of the legend found in these two sources is the connection between Solomon and Heliopolis.

Taking all this into account we may conclude that neither the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah* nor the *History* of John of Ephesus should be regarded as direct sources of the story in CT. While it is clear that the author of CT built his narrative using an already existing tradition about Solomon and Heliopolis similar to those found in the two other works, it is impossible to establish his source with any accuracy. Most likely, it was an oral tradition that was further reworked in order to fit the narrative framework of CT.[74]

What is significant for the dating of CT is that we seem to have the *terminus post quem* for the origin of the tradition connecting Solomon and Heliopolis. The necessary information comes from the so-called *Oracle of Baalbek*, an anonymous apocalyptic composition written in Greek. As the editor of the text, Paul J. Alexander, has shown, this text was composed between the years 502 and 506 by an unknown Christian author, on the basis of an older apocalyptic text, the

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[71] Several mss. of the Eastern group also have readings close to the Western recension – Or^{C}: ܐܓܠܬ; Or^{D}: ܐܓܠܬ.

[72] See ed. BROOKS 1919-1924, v. 2, pp. 75-76.

[73] See ed. CHABOT 1927-1933, v. 2, pp. 129-131.

[74] For a detailed discussion of this tradition, see MINOV 2010.

Theodosian Sybil.[75] Of particular importance for us is Alexander's convincing argument that the *Oracle* was written in Baalbek. This conclusion is based on the author's intimate knowledge of the city and the area close to it, as well as on some elements of local patriotism exhibited in his work.

At one particular moment, the *Oracle* speaks about the construction of pagan temples in Heliopolis that should take place in the Seleucid and Roman periods and is ascribed to the particular monarchs:

> In the fifth generation three kings will arise, Antiochus, Tiberius and Gaius <...> And they will build up the temples of Heliopolis and the altars of Lebanon (ἀνοικοδομήσουσι τὰ ἱερὰ Ἡλίου πόλεως καὶ τοὺς βωμοὺς τοῦ Λιβάνου); and the shrines of that city are very large and shapely beyond any (other) temple in the inhabited world.[76]

The most important aspect of this account for my argument is that there is no mention of Solomon in connection with the building of the Heliopolitan temples in the *Oracle*. This is remarkable if we take into consideration the fact that its author, although a Christian, openly takes pride in the grandeur and beauty of the pagan monuments and is otherwise prone to indulge in local patriotism.[77] It seems highly unlikely that the author of the *Oracle* would miss such an opportunity to glorify his native city if he knew about Solomon's connection to Heliopolis. Accordingly, the most reasonable explanation of this silence is that the tradition came into existence only after the time of the *Oracle*'s composition, i.e. the first decade of the sixth century. Additional support for this claim is provided by

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[75] On the date and provenance of this work, see ALEXANDER 1967, pp. 41-47.

[76] Ed. ALEXANDER 1967, p. 13, ln. 76-80 [Gr.], p. 25 [tr.].

[77] Cf. his assignment of a particular (positive) role in the final eschatological scenario to the "king from Heliopolis"; ed. ALEXANDER 1967, p. 21, ln. 205-208 [Gr.], p. 29 [tr.].

the fact that a connection between Solomon and Heliopolis appears for the first time in Syriac sources beginning in the second half of the sixth century – Pseudo-Zachariah and John of Ephesus. Therefore, we may suggest that the author of CT, who made use of this tradition, could not have composed his work earlier than the second decade of the sixth century.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there exists an additional avenue for future research on the date and milieu of CT, which is based on linguistic profiling of the work. This approach would entail an assessment of the vocabulary used by the author of CT and its further comparison with that of other Syriac writers. I was not able to pursue this line of research, because it should be based on a new critical edition of CT, which would take into account all its textual witnesses, and would also require a comprehensive and searchable digital corpus of Syriac texts from Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages that does not exist at the present moment.[78] There are, however, several preliminary observations, derived from the pioneering work of Sebastian Brock on the diachronic aspects of Syriac word formation,[79] that testify to the possible usefulness of this approach. For instance, the adjective ܟܗܢܝܬܐ, "priestly," used in CT IV.1 to describe the heavenly ministry of Adam and Eve before their fall, is attested for the first time in a homily by Jacob of Serugh (6th c.) and becomes common among Syriac authors only during the seventh century.[80]

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[78] An important step in this direction is the Syriac Electronic Corpus project, developed presently at the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, Brigham Young University. See HEAL 2012, pp. 73-75.

[79] See BROCK 1990, 2003, 2010.

[80] BROCK 2010, p. 114. In a personal communication Prof. Brock has observed that the same might be applied to the adjective ܟܗܢܝܪܝ, "diabolical," in CT XI.10, which although found in the works of Philoxenus, becomes widely attested only during the late sixth/early seventh century. Cf. also Brock's observations on the phrases ܡܠ ܐܡ ܚܛܐ (CT III.3) and ܟܠܗܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ (CT V.8) in the Eastern recension of CT; BROCK 2008, p. 557.

2. The Milieu of CT

As stated above, I am not going to deal with the theory of the *Urschatzhöhle* proposed first by Albrecht Götze and expanded by Su-Min Ri. It has already been convincingly refuted by Clemens Leonhard, and even more arguments against it could easily be added. Accordingly, there is no need to discuss here the hypothesis of Jewish-Christian origins of CT, as it is closely linked to this theory and is supported mostly by the scholars who accept the very early dating of CT.[81] Given the modern state of knowledge of Jewish-Christianity, there is nothing at all in the theological and socio-cultural outlook of our author that might be regarded as sufficient basis for making such a claim. In fact, it seems that the proponents of a Jewish-Christian background for CT fell into the trap of the archaizing tendency and anti-Graeco-Roman cultural agenda that constitute literary strategies pursued consciously by the work's author.[82]

Putting aside the theory of Jewish-Christian origins, the most widely held opinion on the origins of CT is that it was produced in an East-Syrian milieu. This hypothesis was first set forth by Götze, who suggested an East-Syrian provenance for the editor of CT, while proposing the sixth century as the time of the work's "final redaction".[83] This opinion was adopted later on by many scholars and until now is, arguably, the most prevalent point of view on the origins of this composition.[84] This theory, however, has its weak points. In what follows I will examine in detail the arguments supporting the theory of East-Syrian origins of CT. After that I shall bring into consideration additional evidence that makes it possible to argue in favor of a West-Syrian provenance for the work.

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[81] See Götze 1922, p. 91; Ri 2000, pp. 577-582.

[82] See on this Minov 2013a, p. 321.

[83] See Götze 1922, pp. 90-91.

[84] Cf. Vosté 1939, p. 80, n. 1; Denis 2000, v. 1, p. 31; Toepel 2006a, pp. 6-7.

2.1. East-Syrian features in CT

The main support for the proponents of the theory of East-Syrian provenance of CT comes from the explicit anti-Miaphysite statements found in the two passages of the Eastern recension – CT XXI.19 and XXIX.10.

The longer of these passages, CT XXI.19, is found in the section retelling the story of Noah's drunkenness and cursing of Canaan. After a typological interpretation of the patriarch's lapse–based on Psalm 78:65–which likens Noah's drunken posture to that of Jesus on the cross, the following aside remark is found:

> Let the heretics who say "God was crucified" be silent. Here he (i.e. David) calls him "Lord," even as Peter the Apostle said, "this Jesus, whom you crucified, has God made Lord and Messiah." He did not say "God," but "Lord," thus announcing the union of the two hypostases that were united in one sonship.[85]

A similar, although shorter, polemical statement appears later on, in CT XXIX.10, where the typological explanation of the lamb on the tree in the story of Isaac's sacrifice (Gen 22:13) as a symbol of crucified Jesus is accompanied by the following explanation:

> Let the mouths of the heretics be stopped who in their madness ascribe passibility to the Eternal Being.[86]

These passages attack some unidentified "heretics" that, supposedly, ascribe to the Divine Nature the capability of suffering. One immediately recognizes in them the accusation

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[85] Or^{A} – ܐܢ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܨܠܝܒ ܢܬܟܠܡ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܡܫܬܘܬܦܝܢ ܒܚܕ ܒܪܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܦ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܫܠܝܚܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܦܛܪܘܣ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܦ

of *theopaschism*, a stock argument from the arsenal of anti-Miaphysite polemic employed by East-Syrian polemicists.[87] Both of these passages should thus be taken as expressions of mainstream East-Syrian theology, all the more so, given the appearance of the Christological formula of "the two *qnōmē* united in one sonship" in CT XXI.19.

Now the question arises whether this polemic should be regarded as authentic, i.e. belonging to the original stratum of CT, or as later additions. There are several reasons that lead me to prefer the latter option. The secondary nature of these sections is more obvious in the case of the first passage, CT XXI.19. First of all, it does not fit well within its literary unit, since it breaks the flow of the narrative, where the call to wake up addressed to God in the quotation from Psalm 78:65 would be followed immediately by Noah's awakening from his sleep. Moreover, it goes against the general habit of the use of Scriptural quotations by CT's author, who as a rule does not pile them one upon another in order to make his point. A second suspicious feature of the first passage is the use of of the "two *qnōmē*" Christological language, a distinctive attribute of East-Syrian Christology. The problem with this formula in CT is that it entered the stock of East-Syrian Christological terminology relatively late, during the first half of the seventh century.[88] The first official adoption of the language of "the two *qnōmē* united in one *parṣōpā* of sonship" comes from the profession of faith offered by the East-Syrian bishops to the Shah Khusrau II in the year 612.[89] However, even after that it took some time and effort on the side of the hierarchy of the Church of the East to overcome resistance to this new formula and promulgate it among the wide masses of believers. This fact, taken together with the generally non-sophisticated and archaizing theological language of CT as well as our tentative dating of this work, would put its author rather ahead of his time.

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87 See CHEDIATH 1982, pp. 71-75.

88 See on this, REININK 2009, pp. 219-221.

89 See ed. CHABOT 1902, pp. 564-567 [Syr.], 581-584 [tr.].

The case of the second anti-Miaphysite invective, CT XXIX.10, is even more revealing, as it provides us with a fascinating opportunity to observe how CT's text in the East-Syrian milieu underwent the process of gradual theological adjustment. This verse comes from the section dealing with the life of Abraham. It is situated within the passage that offers a typological interpretation of Isaac's sacrifice. In order to facilitate understanding of the following textual elucidations, I offer in the table below a synopsis of this verse in its immediate context that includes three main East-Syrian versions and one representative of the West-Syrian recension.[90]

	Or^{F}	**Or^{A}**	**Or^{M}**	**Oc^{d}**
XXIX.8	There Abraham brought up Isaac for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross of Christ, and the redemption of our forefather Adam.	And there Abraham brought up Isaac his son for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross, and Christ, and the redemption of our forefather Adam.	And there Abraham brought up Isaac for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross of his redemption, and the redemption of our forefather Adam.	And there Abraham brought up Isaac for a burnt offering. And he saw the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and the redemption of Adam.

[90] In the following discussion of CT XXIX.10 I am much indebted to LEONHARD 2004.

XXIX.9	That tree of the Cross of Christ appeared to Abraham, (and) the lamb (was) the mystery of the killing of our Redeemer.	The tree was a type of the Cross of Christ our Lord, and the lamb in its branches was the mystery of the manhood of the Only-begotten Word.	That tree was a type of the Cross of Christ our Lord.	And the sacrifice of Isaac was a prefiguration of the killing of our Lord. And the tree of the lamb was declaring the Living Cross, upon which the Lamb of Life was sacrificed. And the True Lamb appeared to Abraham, the mystery of the killing of our Redeemer.
XXIX.10	Apostle Paul said that "Christ served circumcision". He did not say that "he was circumcised," but – "he served."[91]	And, because of this, Paul cried out and said that "If they had only known, they would not crucified the Lord of glory." Let the mouths of the heretics be stopped	And, because of this, I proclaim Our Lord. And apostle Paul, who takes pleasure in His humanity, cried out and said that "If they had only known,	For Paul, apostle and blessed one, said that "Christ, your God, served circumcision."[94]

[91] ... .

[94] ... .

		who in their madness ascribe passibility to the Eternal Being.[92]	they would <not> crucified the Lord of glory." Paul, the servant of God <and> apostle, said this in the beginning of the letter. And not like say the wicked Cyril and accursed Severus, who ascribe passibility to the Eternal Being.[93]	
XXIX.11	When Christ was eight days old, Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, rose up to circumcise him according to the Law. And he circumcised him	When Christ was eight days old, Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, rose up to circumcise the child according to the Law. And he circumcised	When Christ was eight days old, Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, rose up to circumcise the child according to the Law. And he circumcised	And when Christ was eight days old Joseph rose up and circumcised him according to the Law.

[92] ܕܫܘܛܝܢ ܗܝ ܕ ܐܡܪ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܢܫ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ ܐܡܪ ܦܘܠܘܣ ܥܒܕܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܘܫܠܝܚܐ ܐܡܪ ܗܢܐ ܒܫܘܪܝܐ ܕܐܓܪܬܐ ܗܕܐ.

[93] ܘܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܡܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܫܛܝܢ ܟܝܪܠܘܣ ܘܣܘܝܪܘܣ ܕܐܢܫ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ ܐܡܪ ܕܐܢܫ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ ܐܡܪ ܕܐܢܫ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܠܥܠܡ.

	according to the Law. However, nothing has been cut off from him according to humanity, but as when a sharp sword that passes through the rays of light or through the light of lamp indeed cuts it and passes (through it), while the light is not harmed at all and the ray of light is not cut off, (likewise) Christ performed the duty of circumcision, while (his) body was not harmed and the iron took away nothing by cutting him.	him according to the custom of the Law.	him according to the custom of the Law.	
XXIX.12	And likewise Abraham	And likewise also Abraham	And likewise Abraham	And likewise also Abraham

	took up the lamb for a burnt offering, while depicting a type of the death of our Redeemer. For the blessed Moses did not say that Abraham had sacrificed the lamb, but "brought him up for a burnt offering." How, however, something incorporeal could be slaughtered?! For this lamb was not a (regular) offspring of sheep, but the lamb of the type of the mystery of our Lord's death.	brought up his son for a burnt offering, while depicting by this (act) the crucifixion of Christ.	brought up the lamb for a burnt offering, while depicting a type of the crucifixion of Christ.	brought up the lamb for a burnt offering, – that pure and innocent Isaac, a mystery of the image of the innocent Abel; and while Abraham was depicting a type of the Cross of our Lord.

Let us start with the anti-Miaphysite passage in CT XXIX.10 as it appears in Or^{M}, where the names of Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch, two main representatives

of the Miaphysite party in the eyes of East-Syrians, are mentioned. There are several reasons to suggest that it cannot be original and should be regarded as a secondary development. Not only are the names of Cyril and Severus absent from the majority of the Eastern manuscripts, but their appearance contradicts the authorial strategy of CT. First, it goes against the general predilection on our author's side to avoid mentioning any contemporary persons by name, be they authorities with whom he agrees or his opponents. Second, it is incompatible with the claimed Ephremian authorship of his work.[95] It would be a blatant anachronism for the author of CT to present Ephrem in argument with theologians who lived after him. The version of Or^{M} emerges, thus, as a result of the further and rather careless development of the anti-Miaphysite polemic as it is found in Or^{A} or other textual witnesses similar to it.

Let us turn now to the anti-Miaphysite polemic of CT XXIX.10 in Or^{A}. There, like in CT XXI.19, the charge of theopaschism is aimed against some unnamed "heretics". An answer to the question of its authenticity is provided by comparing it with another important East-Syrian manuscript – Or^{F}. The first striking difference between these two textual witnesses is that no anti-Miaphysite sentiment whatsoever is found in Or^{F}. This manifests a lack of agreement between the Eastern manuscripts and, thus, gives us a serious reason to doubt the authenticity of the anti-Miaphysite polemic in Or^{A}. If one claims that this polemic comes from the original stratum of CT, then one would also have to explain why the East-Syrian scribe of Or^{F} would remove polemical rhetoric that does not contradict his beliefs.

Another significant disagreement between Or^{F} and Or^{A} is the different Pauline verses brought forward as scriptural proof-texts. While Or^{F} quotes Romans 15:8, Or^{A} quotes 1 Corinthians 2:8. Between these two versions, Or^{F} should be preferred as the original reading. First, it is found not only in

[95] For more on this aspect of CT, see MINOV 2013b, pp. 157-165.

Or^{F}, but is supported by the majority of West-Syrian manuscripts (Oc^{abcd}). The second reason is that it fits much better the overall context of this pericope. Thus, the following lines (11 and 12) contain a typological argument that compares the circumcision of Jesus with the sacrifice of Isaac. This typology is found in all Eastern and Western manuscripts and, thus, undoubtedly belongs to the original stratum of CT. However, in its most developed and consistent form it appears only in Or^{F}. There the lines 10-12 form an integral unit, where both Romans 15:8 and Genesis 22:13 are interpreted in such a way as to provide scriptural proofs for the claim that Jesus was not circumcised in reality. In line 10, Or^{F} explores the lexical ambiguity of the words of Paul in Romans 15:8, according to the Peshitta version, that Jesus "served/administered circumcision" (ܫܡܫ ܡܘܠܬܐ). He claims that since the apostle does not use here a more straightforward expression like "he was circumcised" (ܐܬ ܒܫ), no actual circumcision is meant here and, thus, it supports his case. This interpretation of Romans 15:8 is backed by the exegesis of Genesis 22:13 in line 12. The same hermeneutic strategy is applied to this biblical verse, where the sacrifice of the ram found by Abraham as a substitute for Isaac is mentioned. Again, on the basis of the fact that the biblical text does not use a straightforward term like "he sacrificed him" (ܐܣܩ), but has the more ambiguous phrase "he (i.e. Abraham) brought it up for a burnt offering instead of his son" (ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܠܐܒܪܗܡ ܐܣܩ), the author of Or^{F} claims that the ram found by Abraham was not slaughtered in reality. This ingenious and otherwise unattested exegesis of Genesis 22:13 mirrors structurally and conceptually the interpretation of Romans 15:8. Both of these exegetical arguments are brought forward to prove that contrary to the literal meaning of the canonical narrative, i.e. Luke 2:21, Jesus was not circumcised in reality.

I believe that these exegetical traditions are nothing but remnants of the oldest recoverable stratum of CT that features elements of the radical "Phantasiast" Miaphysite Christology, discussed above. In the case of XXIX.10-12 this ideology was

preserved only by Or^{F}, while having been censored out in the rest of manuscripts. This censoring can still be recognized in the fact that all Eastern and Western manuscripts have the mention of Jesus' circumcision, i.e. XXIX.11, embedded into the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac. Such a connection is highly unusual for the traditional West- and East-Syrian ways of handling the story of Isaac's sacrifice and makes sense only in its longest version that appears in Or^{F}. Furthermore, while in XXIX.11 the original Pauline quotation of Romans 15:8 was preserved in Oc^{d}, in the Eastern tradition it was replaced by 1 Corinthians 2:8, enhanced by the anti-Miaphysite rhetoric. Another trace of this East-Syrian "enhancement" can be recognized in XXIX.10, where different manuscripts attach different symbolic value to the ram caught in the branches. In Or^{A} it is explained as "the manhood of the Only-begotten Word" (ܟܝܢܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ). This reading that exhibits distinctively East-Syrian Christology is not supported by the majority of East-Syrian manuscripts and is inferior to the more general "the killing of our Redeemer" (ܡܚܐ ܕܦܪܩܢ) of Or^{F} and Oc^{d}.

All these considerations bring us to the conclusion that none of the passages in the Eastern recension of CT that feature anti-Miaphysite polemic should be taken as evidence in discussions of the confessional background of the work's original stratum. Both CT XXI.19 and XXIX.10 exhibit features that suggest significant editing during the process of transmission within the East-Syrian milieu.

To these two cases, more passages could be added that convey distinctive East-Syrian theological ideas and images in the manuscripts of the Eastern recension, but which are absent from those of the Western recension. One of the most telling examples of this kind is found in CT LI.18-19, where a paraphrase of John 19:34 is offered. In all East-Syrian manuscripts of this passage, the blood and water that came out from Jesus' side pierced by the lance are said to be

"unmixed".[96] At the same time, all Western manuscripts express just the opposite idea, i.e. that they were "mixed".[97]

This divergence in the two groups of manuscripts reflects two different exegetical approaches to John 19:34 grounded in diametrically opposed Christological positions, East-Syrian and West-Syrian. If we turn to the East-Syrian tradition, Aḥob of Qaṭar, a sixth-century exegete, states in connection with John 19:16-42 that "all men saw water and blood mixed; but John saw it separated."[98] Later, Īšōʿdād of Merv (9th c.) in his *Commentary on John* offers a similar interpretation of this verse, while supporting it by the authority of Theodore of Mopsuestia.[99] In distinction from the East-Syrian authors, West-Syrians regarded the blood and water of John 19:34 as mixed. Thus, the author of the West-Syrian commentary on liturgy, composed in the sixth or seventh century, states that "the fact that we mix wine and water (in) the saving cup is a type of the blood and saving water which flowed from the side of our Saviour on the redeeming Cross."[100] In the West-Syrian tradition this idea is, most likely, rooted in the thought of Cyril of Alexandria, who in his *Commentary on John*, while explaining the blood and water of John 19:34 as the types of baptism and Eucharist, explicitly states that they were "mixed".[101] We also find this view expressed in the *Homily on the Two Birds* by Jacob of Serugh, who at certain point says about the blood and water

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[96] Or^{ABCDELOPSUV} – ܕܐ ܒܠܚܕ ܡܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܚܙܘ ܕܡܐ ܘܡܝܐ ܕܐܬܒܪܝ ܡܢ ܓܒܐ ܕܨܠܝܒܐ ܘܝܘܚܢܢ ܚܙܐ ܕܐܬܦܪܫ ܗܘ ܠܚܕܗ; Or^{MH} – ܟܠ ܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܚܙܘ ܕܡܐ ܘܡܝܐ ܕܐܬܒܪܝ ܡܢ ܓܒܐ ܕܨܠܝܒܐ ܘܝܘܚܢܢ ܚܙܐ ܕܐܬܦܪܫ ܗܘ ܠܚܕܗ.

[97] Oc^{abcd} – ܕܐ ܒܠܚܕ ܡܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܚܙܘ ܕܡܐ ܘܡܝܐ ܕܐܬܒܪܝ ܡܢ ܓܒܐ ܕܨܠܝܒܐ.

[98] Aḥob's scholia on the Gospel of John survived partially in the Ethiopic exegetical tradition. For this particular tradition, see COWLEY 1980, p. 337.

[99] See ed. GIBSON 1911-1916, v. 3, p. ,ו [Syr.], v. 1, p. 278 [tr.].

[100] Ed. BROCK 1986, §40, pp. 389 [Syr.], 393 [tr.].

[101] *Comm. in Ioan.* XII – λόγχῃ διανύττουσι τὴν πλευράν, ἡ δὲ **μεμιγμένον** ὕδατι τὸ αἷμα διέβλυσε; ed. PUSEY 1872, v. 3, p. 103.

issuing from Jesus' side that "the glorious stream was mixed of blood and water".[102]

At the present stage, there is no secure way to establish on a purely textual level, which of these two readings is original. However, it is important to stress at this point that because these readings correspond to the respective theological agendas of the transmitters of the two recensions of our work, one should refrain from summoning them as witnesses to the confessional profile of the original stratum of CT. Traditions of this sort should thus be regarded as additions. Concerning theologically charged passages in CT, only those of them should be used for passing judgment on the character of the original text that would conform to the criterion of dissimilarity, i.e. when East-Syrian traditions would appear in the manuscripts of the Western recension or vice versa.

In light of the previous analysis of the explicit East-Syrian traditions in CT, it became clear that they cannot serve as a proof of the work's East-Syrian provenance and that new criteria for establishing the confessional affiliation of the proto-text, from which both the West- and East-Syrian recensions derive should be established. I believe that the safest avenue for such an enterprise would be to take into consideration only those traditions that (a) are attested in the manuscripts of both recensions, or (b) conform to the criterion of dissimilarity.

Let us turn, first, to the latter criterion. The most striking example of dissimilarity is presented by the appearance of the idiosyncratic radical Miaphysite tradition on the circumcision of Jesus in the Eastern recension (CT XXIX.11; XLVI.16-18), including its best textual witnesses – Or^{F} and Or^{A}. The importance of this tradition for understanding the process of textual growth of CT cannot be overestimated. I will not repeat here everything that has already been said above, but will underscore only some implications this fact has for

[102] ܟܒܫܬܐ ܕܡܐ ܕܝܡ ܚܝܐ ܡܫܬܪ ܡܗܘ; ed. BEDJAN 1905-1910, v. 3, p. 240, ln. 15.

reconstruction of CT's ideological background. The presence of this exclusively Miaphysite material in the Eastern recension cannot be explained as an isolated case of later textual addition, since it is attested in *all* manuscripts of this recension. Accordingly, we must assume that it was present in the lost prototype from which all East-Syrian manuscripts are ultimately derived.

This gives us a serious reason to challenge the consensus regarding the East-Syrian origins of CT. In fact, some scholars have already opted in favor of a West-Syrian provenance for this work. Ernest Budge was the first to raise such a possibility. In the introduction to his English translation of CT, he states that "the writer was certainly a Syrian Jacobite who was proud of his native language".[103] As an illustration of his thesis, Budge points out several examples where the author of CT affirms the priority of the Syriac language (i.e. CT XXIV.9-11; LIII.25-26). However, as important as they are for understanding the cultural background of CT, these passages by themselves can hardly be given the weight of definitive proof when it comes to the confessional profile of its author, since the priority of the Syriac language was evoked not only by the West-Syrians but also by some Antiochene and East-Syrian authors.[104]

To that one might add a recent contribution of Sebastian Brock, who in his review of Alexander Toepel's book on CT has pointed out several instances of West-Syrian traditions that appear in the work.[105] Besides the identification of the spirit of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit, which I shall discuss in greater detail below, Brock mentions two other cases: (a) the appearance in CT V.8 (Or^M) of a strikingly West-Syrian incarnational formula, i.e. the phrase ܡܫܝܚܐ ܐܬܬܚܕ ܒܗ; (b) a peculiar syntactic form (ܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܥܡ), typical for the West-Syrian translation technique, that is used in CT III.3 (Or^M) in

[103] BUDGE 1927, p. 22.

[104] For a detailed discussion of this subject, see MINOV 2013b, pp. 165-184.

[105] See BROCK 2008, p. 557.

order to describe Satan's separation from God. While both these cases conform to the aforementioned criterion of dissimilarity, since both of them appear in the manuscripts of the Eastern recension, their absence from the best Eastern textual witness, i.e. Or^{A}, prevents us from giving too much weight to them.

Now that the implausibility of the theory of CT's East-Syrian origins has become evident and the possibility of a West-Syrian provenance has emerged, I would like to discuss several additional considerations that can assist us in developing a consistent and satisfactory theory of the work's confessional milieu. In what follows, I would like to propose two arguments that enhance even further the theory of West-Syrian origins of CT, one that is based on its exegetical affinity, and another based on the history of the work's reception.

2.2. The exegetical affinity of CT

In order to discern the confessional profile of CT's author it may be worth exploring the exegetical background of his work. Since the main task of our author was to rewrite the biblical narrative by adapting it to the new circumstances, it comes as no surprise that he did not carry it out in a vacuum, but relied upon a previous tradition of scriptural exegesis. Taking this into consideration, one may attempt to uncover and analyze those exegetical traditions that he inherited from his predecessors. I believe that careful examination of such embedded exegetical material offers an additional avenue for establishing the author's confessional milieu and allows us to situate him within the West- or East-Syrian tradition of exegesis.

First, it should be noted that some of the exegetical traditions used by the author of CT belong to the earlier stratum of Syriac tradition. For example, the symbolic interpretation of Paradise as the Church (CT III.17) is found already in the writings of Ephrem.[106] Likewise, Ephrem, or one

[106] Cf. *De Parad.* 6.7.1; 6.8.1; *De virgin.* 4.14; cf. also *Odes of Solomon* 11:16-19.

of his immediate disciples, interprets Leah and Rachel as symbols of the Old and New Covenant in a way similar to CT XXXI.26-28.[107] The interpretation of Jacob's ladder (Gen 28:12) as the symbol of the Cross (CT XXXI.17-19) appears in Aphrahat (*Dem.* IV.5). All these traditions comprise a common pool of exegetical lore that was shared by the authors belonging to the West-Syrian as well as East-Syrian traditions and, thus, cannot serve as markers of our author's exegetical background.

However, there is a sufficient number of exegetical traditions in CT that are not attested in the works of fourth-century Syriac writers, but entered Syriac-speaking milieu later. Many of these have parallels in the works composed in Greek and Syriac during the fifth and sixth centuries. In what follows I offer an examination of several cases, when exegetical traditions embedded by the author of CT into his narrative demonstrate his distance from the East-Syrian and closeness to the West-Syrian exegetical tradition.

a) Genesis 1:2 – the "spirit of God"

In the first chapter of CT, which retells the biblical story of creation, the following description of the activity of the Holy Spirit is presented (CT I.4-7):

> And on the first day of the week the Holy Spirit, one of the persons of the Trinity, hovered over the waters, and through its hovering thereof over the face of the waters, the waters were blessed so that they might become producers of offspring, and they became hot, and all natures of the waters glowed with heat, and the leaven of creation was united to them. As the mother-bird makes warm her young by the protective hovering of her wings, so that the young birds inside the eggs are formed through

[107] Cf. *Commentary on the Diatessaron* III.17.

> the warmth of her heat, likewise when the Spirit, the Paraclete, hovered over the waters, the leaven of the breath of life was united to them through the activity of the Holy Spirit.[108]

One aspect of this account that is of particular interest to us is that the "spirit of God" (Heb רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים; Peshitta ܪܘܚܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ) of Genesis 1:2 is explicitly identified here with the Holy Spirit, i.e. one of the persons of the Trinity. This identification appears in all manuscripts of the Eastern recension as well as in some Western manuscripts (Oc^{d}).[109] Accordingly, this exegetical tradition should be considered as part of the original stratum of CT.

Genesis 1:2 had a rich history of interpretation among Syrians.[110] One of the earliest attestations of the "spirit of God" of this verse to be identified with the Holy Spirit comes from the *Acts of Thomas* (3rd c.). In the fourth act of the *Acts* (§39), "the Holy Spirit that hovers over all created things" is evoked in the Trinitarian doxology that concludes the apostle's prayer.[111] As has been pointed out by scholars, it seems very likely that this description presents an allusion to Genesis 1:2.[112]

One author whose work might serve as a source for this tradition in CT, is Basil of Caesarea. In the *Homilies on Hexaemeron*, Basil explicitly identifies the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit:

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[108] Or^{A} – ܗܕܐ ܕܡܬܐ ܠܗ ܒܟܠ ܡܕܡ ܕܒܪܝܬܐ ܐܦ ܗܟܝܠ ܕܪܘܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܦܪܩܠܛܐ ܪܚܦ ܥܠ ܡܝܐ ܗܟܢܐ ܐܦ ܥܠ ܕܪܘܚܐ ܕܚܝܐ ܐܬܚܒܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܦܥܠܗ ܕܪܘܚܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ

[109] Its absence from Oc^{a} is, most probably, a result of haplography.

[110] See BROCK 1999; JANSMA 1970; VAN ROMPAY 1992.

[111] ܡܠܝ ܕܟܠ ܒܪܝܬܐ ܡܪܚܦ ܪܘܚܐ; ed. WRIGHT, W. 1871, v. 1, p. ٦٩ [Syr.].

[112] See BROCK 1999, p. 329.

> *And the Spirit of God was borne upon the face of the waters*. Does this spirit mean the diffusion of air? The sacred writer wishes to enumerate to you the elements of the world, to tell you that God created the heavens, the earth, water, and air and that the last was now diffused and in motion; or rather, that which is truer and confirmed by the authority of the ancients, by the Spirit of God, he means the Holy Spirit (Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ, τὸ ἅγιον εἴρηται).[113]

It is quite possible that the author of CT received this tradition from the Syriac translation of Basil's *Homilies* that had been made no later than the fifth century.[114] However, it is perhaps even more likely that it reached him through the previous Syriac exegetical tradition. In favor of this proposal is the fact that already by the beginning of the sixth century the unnamed "Syrian man" (Σύρων ἀνδρὸς; ܓܒܪܐ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ), whom Basil mentions further as his informer on the meaning of the verb ἐπεφέρετο (LXX rendering of the participle מְרַחֶפֶת in Genesis 1:2), was identified as Ephrem the Syrian.[115] This connection between the "Syrian" of Basil and Ephrem appears in the works of Severus of Antioch,[116] as well as in the Syriac *Life of Ephrem*.[117] I am inclined to think that one of the reasons for the inclusion of this particular exegetical motif into CT might be the wish of the author to strengthen the credibility of his pseudepigraphic project. The use of a motif that had already been widely associated with the name of Ephrem would

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[113] *In Hexaem*. II.6; ed. GIET 1968, p. 168; tr. JACKSON 1895, p. 63.

[114] The oldest manuscript of Basil's *Homilies* in Syriac (BL Add. 17143) is dated by that time. See on this THOMSON 1995, v. 1, pp. v-vi. For the passage under consideration, see IBID., p. 28 [Syr.].

[115] In fact, there seems to be a consensus among the modern scholars that it was Eusebius of Emesa, on whom Basil was dependent in this case; see on this VAN ROMPAY 1992; TER HAAR ROMENY 1997, pp. 174-183.

[116] Cf. *Against Impious Grammaticus* III.39; ed. LEBON 1929-1938, v. 3, p. 244 [Syr.].

[117] See AMAR 2011, pp. 62-63 [Syr.], 68-69 [tr.].

perfectly fit this goal. There is a certain irony in the fact that the real Ephrem held just the opposite view, as one can see from his genuine *Commentary on Genesis*.

What is important for us is that there is a relatively clear demarcation in the understanding of the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 between the West- and East-Syrian exegetical traditions. While in the former it is usually interpreted as the Holy Spirit, there is a strong predilection on the side of East-Syrian exegetes to avoid such interpretation and to explain this "spirit" as a natural phenomenon.

One of the earliest cases of identification of the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit is found in Origen's works.[118] Later on, Didymus the Blind makes the same connection while speaking about the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism.[119] Furthermore, it is especially significant that Cyril of Alexandria, an Alexandrian theologian and exegete, whose influence upon the West-Syrian tradition cannot be overestimated, also regards the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 to be the Holy Spirit.[120] One can see from these examples that the identification of the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit is a distinctive feature of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition.[121] From there it was taken inro the West-Syrian tradition, where this understanding of Genesis 1:2 appears for the first time in the writings of Severus

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[118] *De principiis* I.3.3; ed. CROUZEL & SIMONETTI 1978, v. 1, pp. 148-149.

[119] *De Trinitate* II.14; PG 39, col. 692-693.

[120] *Contra Julianum* I.28; II.27. Cf. also the fragment ascribed to Cyril in the catena on Genesis published by PETIT 1991, pp. 22-23, #30.

[121] Cf. also Gregory of Nyssa, *Hexaem.* (PG 44, col. 81); Ambrose, *Hexaem.* I.8.29; Jerome, *Quaest. heb. in Gen.*, ad loc.; Augustine, *Conf.* XIII.5.6; *De Gen. ad litt.* IV.16.

of Antioch [122] and becomes well attested after Jacob of Edessa.[123]

In distinction from the Alexandrian and the subsequent West-Syrian tradition, exegetes of the Antiochene school preferred to explain the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 in natural terms – as a kind of wind or as a life-giving force. This trend begins already with Ephrem, who in the *Commentary on Genesis* (I.7) opposes identification of the "spirit of God" with the Holy Spirit and maintains that it should be understood as some sort of natural wind created by God.[124] It was only Ephrem's younger contemporary, Diodore of Tarsus, who, while personally still preferring the naturalistic interpretation of πνεῦμα Θεοῦ, was ready to admit that this "spirit" might also refer to the Holy Spirit.[125] Contrary to that, the later Antiochene exegetes abandon the latter option completely. In the fifth century, the naturalistic understanding of the "spirit of God" becomes sanctified by the ultimate authority of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Even though the relevant part of Theodore's *Commentary on Genesis* does not survive, his opinion on this issue has been preserved by the later East-Syrian tradition. Thus, according to the testimony of Theodore bar Kōnī (8th c.):

> the blessed Interpreter rejects it (i.e. identification of the "spirit of God" with the

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122 Cf. the following interpretation of Gen 1:2 transmitted under the name of Severus in one of the catenae on Genesis: τὸ ἅγιον λέγει πνεῦμα, τὸ ζωογονοῦν καὶ συνιστῶν τὰ πάντα; ed. PETIT 1991, p. 3, #32. This opinion appears under the name of "Severus" also in the Amharic *andəmta* commentaries on Genesis; see COWLEY 1988, pp. 152-153.

123 For the references, see JANSMA 1970, pp. 21-22. A notable exception is Jacob of Serug, who argues against this interpretation of Genesis 1:2; see BEDJAN 1905-1910, v. 3, p. 23. This, however, becomes understandable if one takes into account Jacob's education in the school of Edessa, possibly, under Narsai, where he came under the heavy influence of Theodore's exegesis. See on this, JANSMA 1959.

124 ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܕܪܘܚܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܝܠܕ ܡܢ ܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ; ed. TONNEAU 1955, pp. 11-12 [Syr.]. Cf. also *Contra Haereses* L.8. On this idea of Ephrem, see KRONHOLM 1978, pp. 43-44.

125 See DECONINCK 1912, p. 93, fragm. 4.

> Holy Spirit) as impious and says clearly that it was air. It was namely, says he, not the purpose of the prophet (Moses) to speak here of God. Furthermore, the Person of the Holy Spirit has remained unknown to the ancestors until the coming of our Lord. Furthermore, it is impious to think that He (God) had mingled the Holy Spirit with darkness.[126]

As has been argued by Ernest Clarke, in this particular case Theodore bar Kōnī does not use Theodore's *Commentary on Genesis* directly, but draws upon some unidentified intermediate source.[127]

After Theodore, the naturalistic understanding of Genesis 1:2 becomes virtually canonical in the Antiochene school,[128] as well as in the East-Syrian exegetical tradition dependent on it.[129] I am not aware of a single East-Syrian exegete, who would identify the "spirit" of Genesis 1:2 with the Holy Spirit. This predilection was eventually recognized by the West-Syrians as a distinctive feature of the East-Syrian exegetical tradition. For example, Dionysius bar Ṣalībī, a twelfth-century West-Syrian theologian, explicitly labels this opinion as "Nestorian".[130]

In light of this pronounced difference in the understanding of Genesis 1:2 between the West- and East-Syrian exegetical traditions, the identification of the "spirit of God" as the Holy Spirit in CT can be used as a marker that allows us to establish the exegetical affiliation of our author. This tradition betrays

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[126] ܗܕܐ ܒܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܒܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܝܟ ܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܒܗ ܐܠܐ ܐܝܪ ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܐܝܟ ܠܐ ܐܬܐ ܠܡܐ ܕ

the dissimilarity of CT's exegetical background with the contemporary East-Syrian tradition as well as its indebtedness to the Alexandrian and West-Syrian exegesis.

b) Genesis 9:20-27 – Noah's drunkenness

In CT XXI.18-22 the following interpretation of Genesis 9:20-27, the biblical episode that contains the account of Noah's drunkenness, is offered:

> For Noah by his lying down in sleep, having drunk wine, depicts the cross of Christ, as the blessed David sings about him, saying – "Wake up, Lord, like a sleeping man, and like a man whom wine has overcome" (cf. Ps 44:23; 78:65). Let the heretics who say "God was crucified" be silent! Here David calls him "Lord," even as Peter the apostle said, "This Jesus, whom you crucified, has God made Lord and Christ" (Acts 5:30-31). He did not say "God", but "Lord", thus making known concerning the unity (or oneness) of the two persons who were united in one sonship. Now when Noah woke up from his sleep he cursed Canaan, and reduced his offspring to slavery, and scattered his offspring among the nations. And when our Lord rose from the dead he cursed the Jews, and scattered their offspring among the nations.[131]

In the following analysis of this pericope I shall disregard the sentence directed against "the heretics" as, most probably,

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[131] Or^{A} – ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܨܠܒ ܗܘ ,ܒܝܫ ܕ ܢܘܚ ܕܫܩܝ ܚܡܪܐ ܕܫܪܐ ܡܬܬܚܙܐ ܒܗ ܘ ܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܕܝܘܕ ܡܒܪܟ ,ܡܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܕܝܘܕ ܡܒܪܟ ܐ

a late anti-Miaphysite addition introduced by the East-Syrian transmitters of the text that does not belong to the original stratum of CT.

Such a figurative approach to Noah's drunkenness is not attested among the Syriac writers of the fourth century, for whom the figure of this biblical patriarch served mostly as an illustration of various virtues or as a general example of righteous behavior. Thus, for Aphrahat Noah is primarily an example of a righteous and innocent man, who keeps his faith in the midst of the wicked generation.[132] In a similar vein, the author of the *Book of Steps* evokes Noah as an example of lowliness and humility.[133] For Ephrem as well, Noah is mostly a paragon of righteousness.[134] Although Ephrem does on occasion use the figure of Noah to serve as a symbol or type of Christ, he never likens the story of the patriarch's drunkenness to the suffering of Christ. For example, in his *Commentary on Genesis* Ephrem justifies Noah's failure and explains it as caused not by the patriarch's intemperance in drinking, but by the long period of abstinence during his stay in the ark and afterwards.[135] In the *Hymns on the Nativity*, where Ephrem deals with Genesis 9:20-27 in a figurative way, the drunkenness and nakedness of Noah are related to Adam, not to Christ:

> The two brothers who hid Noah looked for the Only-Begotten of God
> to come and hide the nakedness of Adam, intoxicated with pride.
> Shem and Japheth, as compassionate [men] anticipated the compassionate Son

[132] Cf. *Dem.* 1.14; 3.2; 9.1; 13.5-7; 23.14.

[133] Cf. *Liber Graduum* 21.13-14.

[134] For an overview of Ephrem's treatment of Noah, see KRONHOLM 1978, pp. 172-210.

[135] *In Gen.* VII.1-2; ed. TONNEAU 1955, pp. 63-64 [Syr.].

> Who would come and free Canaan from the servitude of sin.[136]

When one examines how Genesis 9:20-27 was treated by authors that belong to the Antiochene school of exegesis and those dependent upon East-Syrian exegetical tradition, it turns out that no surviving evidence from these schools applies the Noah-Christ typology to this passage. It does not appear in the *Commentary on Genesis* by Eusebius of Emesa.[137] Unfortunately, the part of Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Commentary on Genesis* that deals with the story of Noah and the flood does not survive. However, it is possible to get a glimpse of it from the later East Syrian exegetes, who often quote or refer to Theodore in their works. Yet, this typology is not attested there either. Thus, Theodore bar Kōnī does not mention it in his *Scholion* (II.110), where the problem of why Canaan was cursed by Noah is discussed.[138] It does not appear in the *Diyarbekir Commentary*, whose author was personally acquainted with Theodore's commentary and made significant use of it in his work.[139] It is also absent from the *Commentary on Genesis* by Īšō'dād of Merv, an important transmitter of Theodore's legacy in the East-Syrian exegetical tradition. While dealing with Gen 9:20-23, Īšō'dād brings out a variety of opinions on the subject of Noah's drunkenness, but neither Christ-oriented typology nor anti-Jewish polemic linked to the figure of Ham are found among these.[140] Neither does it appear in the *Commentary on Genesis* by 'Abdallāh ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib (9th-10th c.), another transmitter of Theodorean material among the East-Syrians.[141] This absence is not surprising but accords well with what we know about the general reluctance on the side of Theodore to

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[136] *De Nativ.* I.23-24; tr. (modified) MCVEY 1989, p. 66.

[137] See ed. PETIT et alii 2011.

[138] See SCHER 1910-1912, v. 1, pp. 108-109.

[139] See VAN ROMPAY 1986, pp. 63 [Syr.], 80-81 [tr.].

[140] See VOSTÉ & VAN DEN EYNDE 1950-1955, pp. 127-129 [Syr.], 137-139 [tr.].

[141] See SANDERS 1967, pp. 56 [Arab.], 52-53 [tr.].

apply typological exegesis to Old Testament figures and events.[142]

Another representative of the Antiochene school, Theodoret of Cyrus, does not see anything extraordinary in the nakedness of Noah and explains the whole episode as a result of the patriarch's inexperience (ἀπειρία) in the matters pertaining to the consumption of alcohol, since he was the first viticulturist in human history.[143] In a similar manner, John Chrysostom, who is not alien to the idea of Noah being a prototype of Christ,[144] interprets Noah's drunkenness in a moralizing framework as an exhortation on the dangers of uncontrolled wine consumption, while trying to find excuses for Noah's behavior, such as his distress after the flood and grief over the dead people or his inexperience in drinking.[145]

We also find an interpretation of Genesis 9:20-23 in the work of Cosmas Indicopleustes, a sixth-century Alexandrian traveler, whose strong indebtedness to the East-Syrian tradition of exegesis is a recognized fact.[146] According to him, Noah, who got drunk inadvertently (ἀκούσιον μέθην), had in this state of altered consciousness revealed to him the mysteries (μυστήρια) of the future, namely that the descendants of Japheth and Canaan would serve Christ, who descends from Shem.[147] Again, no typology or anti-Jewish rhetoric is linked to the biblical story, which is understood here historically, in

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[142] Photius of Constantinople comments on Theodore's approach thus (*Bibl.* 38) – "The author avoids the use of allegory as much as possible (φεύγων δὲ τὸν δυνατὸν αὐτῷ τρόπον τὰς ἀλληγορίας), being only concerned with the interpretation of history"; ed. HENRY 1959-1977, v. 1, p. 23; tr. FREESE 1920, p. 33. On this aspect of Theodore's hermeneutics, see ZAHAROPOULOS 1989, pp. 130-132; KERRIGAN 1952, pp. 369-371.

[143] *Quaest. in Gen.* 61; ed. PETRUCCIONE & HILL 2007, v. 1, p. 116.

[144] See on this AMIRAV 2003, pp. 173-175.

[145] See *In Genesim homiliae* XXIX.2 (PG 53, col. 263); *In Genesim sermones* IV.2 (PG 54, col. 595).

[146] See on this WOLSKA 1962, pp. 37-111.

[147] *Topographia Christiana* V.86-88; ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 2, pp. 130-135.

agreement with the hermeneutical principles of the Antiochene school.

Additionally, it should be pointed out that no Christological connection is attested in the Antiochene commentaries for the two verses from Psalms (44:23; 78:65) that were embedded by the author of CT in the story of Noah's drunkenness.[148] This is an additional example of dissimilarity between CT XXI.18-22 and the Antiochene tradition.

When it comes to the East-Syrian authors from Late Antiquity, the same predisposition to interpret the episode of Noah's drunkenness in non-figurative terms can be observed. For example, in his *Homily on the Flood*, Narsai (5th c.) also regards it as a result of the patriarch's inexperience in drinking and sees the purpose of the whole story to give a lesson on moderation in the consumption of alcohol.[149] No symbolic value whatsoever is attached here to the biblical narrative. Furthermore, although Narsai occasionally weaves anti-Jewish polemic into his retelling of the flood, no such sentiment is evoked in connection with Genesis 9:20-27 in the *Homily on the Flood*, as well as in the *Homily on the Blessings of Noah* and the *Homily on the Tower of Babel*, where the curse of Ham is also mentioned by him.[150] In the manner similar to that of Narsai, Martyrius-Sahdona, a seventh-century East-Syrian theologian, while admonishing his audience to avoid wine, refers to Noah and his inexperience in wine-drinking that resulted in the curse of Canaan.[151]

Now that the absence of typological interpretation of Genesis 9:20-27 from the repertoire of the Antiochene and

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[148] For Diodore of Tarsus, see OLIVIER 1980, p. 267; for Theodore of Mopsuestia, see DEVREESSE 1939, pp. 276, 538; for Theodoret of Cyrus, see PG 80, col. 1185, 1500.

[149] See FRISHMAN 1992, pp. 49-50.

[150] On treatment of Canaan's curse in these two works, see FRISHMAN 1992, pp. 61-62, 88. For an example of anti-Jewish polemic in the *Homily on the Flood*, cf. Narsai's explanation of why after the flood the ark was hidden from human eyes; see FRISHMAN 1992, p. 50.

[151] *Book of Perfection* II.7.18; ed. DE HALLEUX 1961, p. 80 [tr.].

East-Syrian exegesis has been sufficiently demonstrated, we shall look for the possible origin of this tradition in CT. Whereas the general idea of Noah as a type or symbol of Christ is widely attested in the works of ancient Christian writers, the comparison of Noah's drunkenness with the crucifixion of Jesus is found infrequently. The earliest example of such typology comes from the letters of Cyprian of Carthage (3rd c.). For this Latin Father, Noah

> projected the figure of the Passion of the Lord there (*figuram dominicae passionis illic extitisse*) because he drank wine, because he was inebriated, because he was made naked in his home, because this nakedness of the father was noticed by his second son and reported outside, but covered by the other two, the oldest and the youngest, and other things which it is not necessary to follow up since it is sufficient to comprehend this alone: that Noe, showing forth a type of future truth, drank not water, but wine, and so expressed the figure of the Passion of the Lord.[152]

It might be noted here that no anti-Jewish sentiment seems to inspire Cyprian's treatment of Genesis 9:20-27. This biblical passage is interpreted in a similar manner by Hilary of Poitiers (4th c.), in whose version of its Christological typology Ham represents pagans and not the Jews.[153]

The earliest examples of this typological explanation of Genesis 9:20-23 to be infused with anti-Jewish rhetoric are found in the writings of Jerome. In the *Dialogue between a Luciferian and an Orthodox*, written before the year 382, he compares the drunken Noah with the crucified Christ, while drawing a parallel between Ham's behavior towards his father

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[152] *Ep.* LXIII.3; ed. DIERCKS 1996, pp. 391-392; tr. DONNA 1964, pp. 203-204.

[153] *Tractatus mysteriorum* I.15; ed. BRISSON 1947, pp. 103-105.

and the Jews mocking Jesus on the cross.[154] The Latin exegete resorts to this interpretation once more in the *Homilies on the Psalms*, one of his works that was written after his move to Palestine. As he discusses the significance of the phrase *pro torcularibus*, "for the wine presses" in the title of Psalm 81, Jerome evokes the story of Noah's drunkenness as a prefiguration of Jesus' suffering upon the Cross and presents the following anti-Jewish interpretation of the figure of Ham: "the older brothers, the Jews, came along and laughed; the younger, the Gentiles, covered up his ignominy".[155]

Slightly later than Jerome, one finds a similar combination of the typological interpretation and anti-Jewish rhetoric applied to the story of Noah by Augustine. In his anti-Manichaean polemical tractate *Against Faustus the Manichaean*, written around the year 400, he presents the following explanation of the biblical story:

> Again, the sufferings of Christ from His own nation are evidently denoted by Noah being drunk with the wine of the vineyard he planted, and his being uncovered in his tent. … Moreover, the two sons, the eldest and the youngest, carrying the garment backwards, are a figure of the two peoples, and the sacrament of the past and completed passions of the Lord. They do not see the nakedness of their father, because they do not consent to Christ's death; and yet they honor it with a covering, as knowing whence they were born. The middle son is the Jewish people (*medius autem filius, id est populus Iudaeorum*), for they neither held the first place with the apostles, nor believed subsequently with the Gentiles. They saw the nakedness of their father, because they

[154] *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* 22; ed. CANELLIS 2000, p. 57.

[155] *Hom. 13 in Ps. 80(81)*; ed. MORIN 1958, p. 77; tr. EWALD 1964, v. 1, pp. 94-95.

> consented to Christ's death; and they told it to their brethren outside, for what was hidden in the prophets was disclosed by the Jews. And thus they are the servants of their brethren.[156]

Although there are significant differences between the version of CT and that of Augustine, such as the presence of the two verses from Psalms in the former and the interpretation of Shem and Japheth as believers of Jewish and gentile origins in the latter, one can easily observe the fundamental similarity between the interpretations of Genesis 9:20-27 by the two Christian authors.[157]

Having found that by the beginning of the fifth century the Noah-Christ typology combined with anti-Jewish rhetoric of the kind found in CT XXI.18-22 had become a well-established exegetical motif in the Latin Church, where it was supported by the authority of Jerome and Augustine, I shall now look for its traces in the Greek exegetical tradition. There, the earliest example of a connection between the crucifixion of Christ and drunkenness of Noah seems to be found in the works of Asterius of Antioch (4th c.).[158] However, in distinction from the author of CT and the Latin authors, Asterius makes this connection on the basis of Psalm 5:2 and Matthew 25:41-43, and not on that of the Passion narrative.

The closest parallel to our passage in the Greek exegetical tradition belongs to an unidentified commentator, quoted in the Greek *Catena on Genesis* edited by Françoise Petit. One of the fragments in this collection that pertains to Genesis 9:21-22 presents the following explanation of the biblical story:

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[156] *Contra Faustum* XII.23; ed. ZYCHA 1891, pp. 350-351; tr. by R. Stothert in SCHAFF 1887 pp. 190-191.

[157] It is interesting that in *De civitate Dei* (XVI.2), written more than ten years after *Contra Faustum*, Augustine seems to change his attitude to this verse by having toned down to a degree the anti-Jewish component in this typology. Now, Ham symbolizes not the Jewish people, but Christian heretics.

[158] *Homilies on Psalms* VII.12; see KINZIG 2002, v. 1, p. 193.

> The spiritual (sense): Noah *has planted a vineyard* – the most beautiful people in Christ; *and he drank of the wine* – first giving a type of suffering; *and became drunk* – having accomplished his suffering; *and lay naked in his house* – crucified by the Jews. *Ham* – the Jewish people mocking at the cross.[159]

The original core of the *Catena on Genesis* to which this anonymous tradition belongs was written in Palestine around the middle of the fifth century.[160] It is confirmed by the fact that later on we find this interpretation incorporated into the *Commentary on Genesis* by Procopius of Gaza (6th c.).[161] Although there it appears in a slightly more expanded form and with a quotation from Isaiah 53:2 added as a proof-text, it is most likely that Procopius, who used the *Catena on Genesis* while occasionally expanding material taken from it,[162] borrowed this exegetical tradition from this source.[163] In both the *Catena* and Procopius we find, albeit only *in nuce*, the two basic elements

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[159] Ὁ νοητός Νῶε *ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα*, τὸν κάλλιστον λαὸν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. *Καὶ ἔπιεν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου*· πρῶτος ἔπαθε τύπον διδούς. *Ἐμεθύσθη*, ἐτελειώθη τῷ πάθει. *Ἐγυμνώθη ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ*, ἐσταυρώθη παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, *Χὰμ* ὁ Ἰουδαϊκὸς λαὸς ὀνειδίσας ἐπὶ τῷ σταυρῷ; ed. PETIT 1993, p. 177, #788.

[160] Modern scholars proposed two possible places of its composition – Caesarea and Gaza; see on this TER HAAR ROMENY 2007, p. 188.

[161] Ἀλληγορίας δὲ νόμῳ ὁ «γεωργὸς Νῶε ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα» τὸν κάλλιστον λαὸν τὸν ἐν Χριστῷ· «ἔπιεν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου» πρῶτος, αὐτὸς ἔπαθε τύπον διδούς· «ἐμεθύσθη»· ἐτελειώθη τῷ πάθει· «ἐγυμνώθη ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ»· ἐσταυρώθη παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις. Χὰμ ὁ Ἰουδαϊκὸς λαὸς ὁ ὀνειδίσας ἐπὶ τῷ σταυρῷ τὸ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως ἰδὼν ἀκαλλὲς ὡς πρὸς τὴν θείαν φύσιν κρινόμενον (*εἴδομεν γὰρ αὐτόν, καὶ οὐκ εἶχεν εἶδος οὐδὲ κάλλος*, Ἡσαΐας φησίν); ed. METZLER 2015, pp. 221-222.

[162] For an overview of scholarly opinions on relationship between these two sources, see TER HAAR ROMENY 2007, pp. 179-183.

[163] EISENHOFER 1897, p. 23, mentions Cyril of Alexandria (*Glaphyra in Genesim* II; PG 69, col. 76A-77A) as the source behind this passage in Procopius, although without going into the details. He is, probably, right in that this passage from Cyril provided Procopius with the verse of Is 53:2.

of CT's interpretation of Genesis 9:21-22 – a comparison of the drunken Noah with the crucified Christ and an anti-Jewish interpretation of the episode with Ham. However, there are also significant differences between these two sources and CT, not unlike those in the case of Augustine, that prevent us from suggesting direct dependence of CT upon any of them.

Returning to the problem of the source of the Noah-Christ typology in CT XXI.18-22, I would like to suggest, by way of speculation, that it was the anti-Chalcedonian Palestinian milieu that served as the mediator between the Latin exegetical tradition and the author of CT. It is not unlikely, given the Miaphysite connection of the two Greek sources where this tradition appears, i.e. the *Catena* and Procopius of Gaza. While it is not certain whether the *Catena* was originally composed in an anti-Chalcedonian milieu, it is definitely known that it circulated there, since there is a stratum of quotations from Severus of Antioch added to the original body of the *Catena*.[164] The Miaphysite connection of Procopius comes to the foreground when one takes into consideration that he authored a panegyric to the emperor Anastasius I and that his brother was Zacharias of Mytilene, one of the active figures in the anti-Chalcedonian movement.[165] Finally, when we also take into account the participation of the Julianists in the global Miaphysite network as well as their presence in sixth-century Byzantine Palestine, it becomes easy to imagine how an exegetical tradition current in late fifth- to early sixth-century Byzantine Palestine could reach Northern Mesopotamia.

In addition to that, there is evidence for the circulation of this exegetical tradition in the Alexandrian milieu. It might be illustrated by the manner in which Cyril of Alexandria interprets the figures of Noah's sons in the *Glaphyra on Genesis*, when he likens Ham mocking his father to the Jews mocking Christ, and identifies Canaan with the Jewish people, whose

[164] For the list of these quotations, see PETIT 1991, p. xxii; see also CARRARA 1988.

[165] For general information on Procopius, see also ALY 1957.

enslavement to sin is referred to in the words of Jesus in John 8:34-36.[166] It should be noted that this work of Cyril was translated into Syriac by Moses of Inghilene, a West-Syrian author, at the beginning of the sixth century[167] and, thus, might be known to the author of CT.

Whether the author of CT received the tradition that combines a Noah-Christ typology with anti-Jewish rhetoric via the Palestinian Miaphysite network or from the Syriac version of Cyril's *Glaphyra*, he did not leave it unchanged but modified it in accordance with his exegetical taste and polemical needs by introducing the verses from Psalms and stressing the cursing of Jewish people by Jesus after his resurrection. However, what is important for my argument is that the total absence of this exegetical motif in the Antiochene and East-Syrian tradition when considered alongside its presence in the Miaphysite and West-Syrian sources allows us to link CT to the latter cultural milieu.

c) Matthew 3:4 – the diet of John the Baptist

In CT XLVIII.3, it is related about John the Baptist that when he was in the desert "he lived upon the root which is called *qamūṣ*, which is wild honey".[168] This sentence appears in both recensions of CT with certain variety in the spelling of the root's name: Or^{M} – ܩܡܘܨ, Or^{C} & Oc^{a} – ܩܡܘܫ, Or^{H} – ܩܡܘܝ, Or^{D} – ܩܡܘܥ. For now, the important thing is not the original form of this plant's name, but rather the possible origins of this tradition.

The vegetarian presentation of John's diet in the desert found in CT XLVIII.3 stands in direct contradiction with the text of New Testament, where (Matthew 3:4, Mark 1:6) he is said to sustain himself with "locusts and wild honey" (ἀκρίδες καὶ μέλι ἄγριον). In distinction from the canonical narrative, the

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166 *Glaph. in Gen.* II; PG 69, col. 76a-77a.

167 See GUIDI 1886.

168 Or^{A} – ,ܡܕܒܪܝ ܩܡܘܨ ܕܥܡ ܡܝܬܟܪ ܒܡ ܡܝܬ ܟܡ ܕܥܡ ܫܡܗܪ ܡܝܬ ܡܕܒ.

author of CT merges these two parts of John's menu into one and explains it as a kind of edible desert plant.

The problem of John's food drew the attention of many Christian interpreters before the time of CT's composition.[169] As a result, there is enough material for comparison and for the establishment of the exegetical affiliations of our author.

To begin with, it should be underscored that the early Syriac tradition does not exhibit acquaintance with the notion of the purely vegetarian diet of John the Baptist. All preserved Syriac versions of New Testament, i.e. the Old Syriac, Peshitta and Harklean, translate Gr. ἀκρίδες of Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6 literally, by rendering it with Syr. ܨܚܝܪ. A literal understanding of this item of John's menu is found also in Aphrahat, who notes that "John used to eat locusts that fly" (ܨܚܝܪ ܕܦܪܚ). [170] One possible exception to from this rule could be the reconstruction of the version of Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6 in Tatian's *Diatessaron* proposed recently by James Kelhoffer. According to Kelhoffer, Tatian described John's food as "honey and milk".[171] Even if Kelhoffer is correct (and that is by no means certain, given the well-known difficulties that any reconstruction of the *Diatessaron*'s original text involves), this version of John's diet differs from the tradition found in CT and, thus, should be set aside as an isolated inner-Syriac development.

When we come to interpretation of John's diet by the Antiochene authors, the same literal approach to the ἀκρίδες of Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6 seems to prevail. Most importantly, it was exactly the opinion held by the school's leader, Theodore of Mopsuestia, as Īšō'dād of Merv testifies:

> According to the Interpreter, the locusts were flying (insects), and the honey – natural (one), that from the heat of the place and the admixture of the air are

[169] For a useful review of Early Christian and patristic views on this subject, see KELHOFFER 2005. For Syriac sources, see also BROCK 1970.

[170] *Dem.* VI.13; ed. PARISOT 1894, col. 289.

[171] See KELHOFFER 2005, pp. 141-147.

constantly found there.[172]

Another Antiochene author, John Chrysostom, seems also to understand ἀκρίδες mostly literally. In his work *On Virginity*, Chrysostom brings John out as a paragon of the ascetic lifestyle and comments on his austerity in the matters related to food, thus: "neither food nor wine nor olive oil sustained his physical being, but grasshoppers and wild honey (ἀκρίδες καὶ μέλι ἄγριον) did."[173]

There is one instance when Chrysostom does seemingly offer a vegetarian interpretation of John's "locusts", describing him as ἀκρίδας ἐκ βοτανῶν ἐσθίων καὶ μέλε ἄγριον.[174] Yet, one should note the ambiguity pertaining to the Greek preposition ἐκ that allows a literal as well as a vegetarian understanding of the ἀκρίδας. Moreover, this tradition appears not in one of the securely authentic Chrysostomian works, but in the sermon Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας contained only in a later Byzantine compendium of John's sermons entitled Ἐκλογαὶ ἀπὸ διαφόρων λόγων. In this collection genuine Chrysostomian material is mixed with later and pseudepigraphic traditions; so, until a systematic critical examination of this corpus is undertaken, it would be wise to suspect those traditions from this corpus that do not have parallels in the genuine writings of Chrysostom as not authentic.[175]

The earliest unambiguous example of an interpretation of John's ἀκρίδες as a kind of edible plant belongs to the fourth century. Athanasius of Alexandria in his *Commentary on Matthew*

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[172] ܗܘ ܕܐܟܠ ܕܒܫ ܘܠܐ ܫܬܐ ܚܡܪܐ ܘܠܐ ܫܡܢ ܙܝܬܐ ܐܠܐ ܐܪܒܐ ܘܕܒܫ ܕܒܪ ; ed. GIBSON 1911-1916, v. 2, p. ב [Syr.]; v. 1, p. 24 [tr.] (modified).

[173] *De virginitate* LXXIX.2; ed. MUSURILLO & GRILLET 1966, p. 378; tr. SHORE 1983, pp. 119-121. Cf. also *Homiliae in Ioannem* XVI.1; PG 59, col. 103.

[174] PG 63, col. 762.

[175] A similar description of John's food as ἀκρίδας βοτανῶν appears in another spurious Chrysostomian composition, the sermon *In oraculum Zachariae redditum*; see PG 50, col. 787.

claims, based on Ecclesiastes 12:5, that John's "locusts" were "some kind of plant" (ἡ βοτάνη τίς).[176] However, in distinction from CT, Athanasius does not identify this plant with the "wild honey", which for him is truly wild honey.[177]

The closest parallel to the interpretation of John's diet in CT XLVIII.3 is offered by Philoxenus of Mabbug. In his *Commentary on Matthew* Philoxenus puts forward the following explanation of Matthew 3:4:

> John was sustained by sweet roots and green herb of the earth, which in the Syriac were called *locusts and wild honey*. For, forsooth, from a word which is like the equivalent of it in the Greek language, he who translated the Scripture into Aramaic thought that the gospel said that John was sustained by locusts. But the meaning of the word is thus, that he ate roots, and dwelt in the wilderness.[178]

Like the author of CT, Philoxenus understands the "locusts and wild honey" to be in fact a kind of "sweet roots" (ܫܠܝܐ ܚܡܐ), for which there is an indigenous Syriac name – ܪܝܚܢ ܪܕܥܐ ܡܚܝ. Making an ingenious exegetical move, he bases this interpretation on the suggestion that the translator of the *Gospel of Matthew* from Greek into Syriac did not recognize the originally Aramaic ܚܡܐ behind the Greek ἀκρίδες and, as a result, mistranslated this word by rendering it with Syriac ܡܚܝ. This, by the way, gives us a glimpse into the possible origins of this particular version of the tradition about John's vegetarianism, where he would eat "roots" and not just some unspecified part of a plant, as in Athanasius. In my

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176 *Fragmenta in Matthæum* 8A (on Mt 3:4); PG 27, col. 1365D.

177 See discussion in KELHOFFER 2005, pp. 172-173.

178 ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܕܟܠ ܥܣܒܐ ܕܒܪ ܐܪܥܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܬܬܪܥܝ ܚܡܐ ܫܠܝܐ ܕܒܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܡܚܝ ܕܒܠܫܢ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܠܡܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܠܚܢ ܗܘ ܕܗܦܟ ܠܟܬܒܐ ܡܢ ܐܪܡܝܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܕܒܫܘܒܚܐ ܐܬܐܡܪ ܕܝܘܚܢܢ ܐܬܬܪܥܝ ܒܚܝܠܘ̈ܬ ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܕܟܬܒ ܕܟܬܒ ܕܗܟܢ ܗܘ ܫܠܝ ܕܐܟܠ ܫܪ̈ܒ̈ܐ ܘܝܬܒ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ ; ed. WATT 1978, fragm. #14, pp. 19 [Syr.], 17 [tr.].

opinion, this tradition emerged in a Syriac-speaking Christian milieu, due to homophony between Gr. ἀκρίς and Syr. ܚܢܦ, as it is demonstrated by Philoxenus.

This understanding of John's diet seems to be common among the anti-Chalcedonian authors. For instance, John Rufus in the *Life of Peter the Iberian* (§169) also identifies the "locusts" eaten by John as "the heads of roots from the desert" (ܪܝܫ ܫܘܪܫ ܚܢܦ ܕܒܪ).[179] In a similar manner, Jacob of Serug represents John the Baptist as a complete vegetarian in the *Memra on the Baptism of the Law*, while also saying that John "lived off herbs and plants and flowers in the desert of Judah, just like the wild animals."[180]

This case, like the two discussed above, serves as another illustration of the difference between the author of CT and the Antiochene exegetical tradition, as well as his affinity with the West-Syrian tradition.

d) Galatians 4:9 – "weak elements"

In the second chapter, while describing the creation of Adam from the four elements, i.e. earth, water, air, and fire, the author of CT characterizes these as "the weak elements" (ܐܣܛܘܩܣܐ ܗܠܝܠܐ) (CT II.10). This expression appears in both versions of CT and, thus, most likely, belongs to the oldest stratum of the work. This characteristic evokes "the weak and beggarly elements" (τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα) of Galatians 4:9. What is remarkable is that while in the Peshitta version this part of Galatians 4:9 is translated as ܐܣܛܘܩܣܐ ܕܠܐ ܚܫܝܚܐ ܘܣܟܝܠܐ, in the Harklean version (or in the Philoxenian, on which the Harklean was based) it is rendered as ܗܠܝܠܐ ܐܣܛܘܩܣܐ ܘܣܟܝܠܐ.[181] It seems possible that the adjective ܐܣܛܘܩܣܐ in CT II.10 is taken from the Harklean or Philoxenian version of Galatians. It is noteworthy that there appears to be a particular

[179] Ed. HORN & PHENIX 2008, pp. 246-247.

[180] ܕܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܫܘܪܫ ܘܥܣܒ ܕܒܪ ܘܦܪܚ ܕܒܪ ܚܢܦ ܘܕܒܫ ܕܒܪ ܘܕܒܫ ܕܒܪ ܝܗܘܕܐ ܐܦ ܥܠ ܦܓܪ ܒܗܡܬܐ ܕܒܪ; ed. BEDJAN 1905-1910, v. 1, p. 157; tr. BROCK 1970, p. 117.

[181] Ed. ALAND & JUCKEL 1995, p. 222.

predilection on the side of the Harklean version for translating the adjective ἀσθενής or derivatives of the verb ἀσθενέω using the adjective ܚܫܠܐ, in distinction from the Old Syriac and Peshitta versions that prefer the adjective ܚܠܝܫ in most of these cases.[182]

The appearance of this tradition may serve as an additional corroboration of the West-Syrian background of CT. However, its possible relevance for dating our work is more problematic. This is mainly due to the fact that the Harklean version of the New Testament, produced by Thomas of Harkel in the year 615-616, presents a revision of the Philoxenian version, made in the years 507-508 by the chorepiscopus Polycarp at the request of Philoxenus of Mabbug.[183] Unfortunately the Philoxenian version is now almost entirely lost, so that it is impossible to establish with a sufficient degree of certainty whether our expression belongs to the original Philoxenian stratum or was introduced later by Thomas of Harkel.

e) Adam-Christ typology

In CT XLVIII.12-30 we are presented with an account where a detailed correspondence is established between the events that took place in the first, second, third, sixth, and ninth hours of the Friday of Jesus' Passion and the same hours of the life of Adam and Eve.[184]

Although no exact parallel to the unique scheme drawn in CT XLVIII.12-30 has been found so far, it is significant that there are two instances of a very close exegetical approach to the passion of Jesus being applied in the *Commentary on Matthew*

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[182] Cf. Mt 25:39,43,44, 26:41; Mk 6:56, 14:38; Lk 4:40, 9:2; Jn 5:7, 6:2, 11:1,3,6. In the whole Peshitta corpus ܚܫܠܐ is used to translate ἀσθενής only twice – in 1Thes 5:14, 1Pet 3:7. Cf. also Lk 5:15, 13:11,12, Jn 5:5, 11:4, where Harklean uses ܐܬܚܫܠܐ in order to translate the noun ἀσθένεια, in distinction from Peshitta that uses ܐܬܝܚܝ.

[183] See on this BROCK 1981.

[184] The scriptural basis for these speculations is provided by such passages as Mt 27:45-46, Mk 15:25,33-34, Lk 23:44-46, Jn 19:14.

by Philoxenus of Mabbug,[185] as well as in a short tractate ascribed to Basil of Caesarea preserved in Armenian, which is dated to the fifth or sixth century.[186] Below I compare the three variants of correspondence between the life of Adam and passion of Christ in a synoptic form that allows us to observe similarities and differences between them.

CT XLVIII.12-30	**Philoxenus of Mabbug**	**Arm. Pseudo-Basil**
1st hour ~ God created Adam // Christ received spittle from the sons of Adam	**1st hour** ~ God created Adam // <…>	**1st hour** ~ God created Adam // Christ was put into chains
2nd hour ~ the naming of the wild animals by Adam // the gathering of the Jews against Christ		
3rd hour ~ the crown of glory is placed on the head of Adam // the crown of thorns is placed on the head of Christ	**3rd hour** ~ Adam and Eve entered the garden and received the commandment // the crucifixion of Christ.	
6th hour ~ Eve goes up to the tree of knowledge // Christ ascends	**6th hour** ~ the eating of the fruit // the darkening of the luminaries	**6th hour** ~ the eating of the fruit // the darkening of the luminaries &

[185] Fragm. 33 (on Mt 27:45-53); ed. WATT 1978, pp. 35-36 [Syr.], 30-31 [tr.].

[186] Published and translated into French by VAN ESBROECK 1987, pp. 385-387.

the Cross, the tree of life ~ Eve gives Adam "the fruit of the gall of death" // Christ is given vinegar and gall **9th hour** ~ Adam descends to the earth's abyss from the height of Paradise // Christ descends from the height of the Cross to Sheol to free the dead ancestors		"ordeal of the taste" (i.e. vinegar and gall) **9th hour** ~ the departure from Paradise // the death of Christ and liberation of the prophets from Sheol

The closest similarities between the three schemes are found in the sixth hour for CT and Philoxenus, and in the first and ninth hours for CT and Pseudo-Basil. However, it does not seem possible to establish a direct literary relationship between these three versions.[187] In my opinion, the fact that CT presents us with the longest and most detailed scheme should be taken as evidence for the later origins of this version in relation to the two others. Yet, it has to be stressed that all three typological schemes are based on the same hermeneutic principle of chronological correspondence between the life of Adam and the passion of Christ.

Once more, the only close parallels to the first part of the typological scheme found in CT XLVIII.12-30 are provided by the Miaphysite sources: Philoxenus and the Pseudo-Basilian tractate that was composed by an author who belonged to the so-called "Aaronite" fraction of the Armenian Julianist movement.[188] It should be noted that there are several East-Syrian authors who also speak about an Adam-Christ

[187] *Contra* VAN ESBROECK 1987, p. 388, who claims that Pseudo-Basil was dependent on CT.

[188] See VAN ESBROECK 1987, pp. 388-390.

typological link in connection with the sixth and ninth hours of Jesus' Passion,[189] but none of them does so for the first and third hours like Philoxenus and Pseudo-Basil.

That the typological correspondence between the events of Jesus' Passion and Adam's life was deeply rooted in the West-Syrian theological tradition can also be seen from the poetical compositions known as *sedrē*, a distinctive liturgical genre attested since the first half of the seventh century. There are at least two texts of this kind (*Sedrā for the Three Hours of the Friday* and *Sedrā for the Nine Hours of the Good Friday*) that draw close parallels between the details of Jesus' suffering on the Cross and the events of Adam's life in a manner very similar to CT.[190] It is remarkable that in the former poem the events in the life of Adam and Jesus that take place at the first and second hours correspond exactly to those found in CT.[191] Unfortunately, since both these works are still unpublished, nothing certain can be said about their relation to CT.

In order to understand better the exegetical background of the author of CT in his use of this typological scheme, let us examine the hermeneutical principle that underlies it. In a concise form it is formulated by the author himself when he addresses his readers with the following direct remark in CT XLIX.1 – "And know that Christ became like Adam in everything".[192] That this saying was not merely a lip-service on the side of our author is corroborated by several examples of the use of Adam-Christ typology in his work.[193]

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189 Cf. Cyrus of Edessa, *Explanation of the Passion* VI.6 (ed. MACOMBER 1974, p. 89 [Syr.], p. 77 [tr.]); Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographia Christiana* II.94-95 (ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 1, pp. 412-415); John bar Penkāyē, *Chronicle* XI (ed. MINGANA 1908, v. 2, p. 52*).

190 See THEKEPARAMPIL 1983, pp. 331-332.

191 See THEKEPARAMPIL 1983, p. 332.

192 Or^{A} – ܘܬܕܥ ܠ[ܫ]ܘ ܕܐܬܥܒܕ ܐܝܟ ܐܕܡ ܒܟܠ ܡܕܡ.

193 Cf. CT II.15-16; V.1, 11-12, 17; VI.17-18. For analysis of this typology in CT, see SIMON 1970, pp. 67-70; VOGL 1979; THEKEPARAMPIL 1983.

The connection between Adam and Christ goes back to the New Testament itself, to the Pauline notion of Christ as the second Adam (cf. Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22,45-47). In later Christian theology and exegesis this idea was further developed and became an important Christological motif.[194] However, while as a theological motif the Adam-Christ typology was shared by virtually all streams of "orthodox" Christianity in antiquity, one can observe a marked difference when it comes to its use as a hermeneutical key for understanding Biblical text. And here a significant difference could be found between the approaches of the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools.

When we turn to the exegetes of the Antiochene school, it becomes apparent that this hermeneutical principle was fundamentally alien to them, and they apply it on a much more modest scale than Alexandrian and West-Syrian authors. This agrees well with a well-known general tendency on the side of the Antiochene exegetes to exhibit a certain restraint in applying Christological typology to interpretation of the Old Testament. Manlio Simonetti characterizes this tendency, while speaking about Theodore of Mopsuestia, as the "drastic reduction of the Christological interpretation of the OT".[195]

Thus, no symbolic or typological exegesis in connection with Adam appears in those fragments of Theodore's *Commentary on Genesis* that survived in Syriac translation where the first chapters of Genesis are covered.[196] Furthermore, it comes almost as a surprise that no Adam-Christ typology is employed in Theodore's *Commentary on John*, where even the Pauline idea of Jesus as the second Adam is reduced to a barest possible minimum.[197] It is true that in his *Commentary on Romans* Theodore does mention Paul's statement about Adam as the "type of the one who was to come" (τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος) from

[194] On these developments, see SIMON 1970.

[195] SIMONETTI 2004, p. 820.

[196] Published by SACHAU 1869; TONNEAU 1953; JANSMA 1962. Some of these passages are translated in MCLEOD 2009, pp. 86-94.

[197] See VOSTÉ 1940.

Romans 5:14, while explaining it as "what happens to Adam typifies what will come to pass in regards to Christ".[198] However this Pauline idea seems to remain marginal for Theodore and bears no hermeneutical consequences for the way he is dealing with the Old and New Testament.

Later on, Theodoret of Cyrus does not resort to Christological typology in his *Questions on the Octateuch*, not even in the sections that cover the story of Adam and Eve. It is also barely present in his commentary on Paul's letters, save the inevitable exception of Romans 5:14-15.

When we turn to such an author as Narsai, the same tendency can be observed: although the Pauline concept of Christ as the "second Adam" (ܐܕܡ ܬܢܝܐ) plays a prominent role in his Christological thought,[199] the Adam-Christ typology does not serve him as an important hermeneutical tool in dealing with the Old Testament. Likewise, Narsai avoids general statements about correspondences between Adam and Christ like the ones in the West-Syrian authors quoted above.

Now, in a striking contrast with this restrained attitude to the Adam-Christ typology among the Antiochenes, one observes a pronounced predilection for its use as an exegetical tool among the Alexandrian theologians and interpreters. The central figure in that respect is Cyril of Alexandria. The crucial role of this typology for Cyril's thought has been stressed by Robert Wilken, who notices that in comparison with the earlier tradition, "for Cyril the Adam-Christ typology plays an even more decisive role, for it is both a key theological concept and a versatile and plastic exegetical key".[200]

This Cyrillian emphasis on Adam-Christ typology was continued and developed even further in the later West-Syrian exegetical tradition. The idea of *total* correspondence between Adam and Christ is well attested among the West-Syrian

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[198] ἐγένετο δὲ τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἀδὰμ τύπος τῶν κατὰ Χριστόν; ed. STAAB 1933, p. 119; tr. MCLEOD 2009, p. 91.

[199] For examples and discussion, see MCLEOD 1979, pp. 22-29. Cf. also *Homilies on Creation* III.295; ed. GIGNOUX 1968, p. 602.

[200] WILKEN 1966, p. 142.

authors of the fifth and sixth centuries. For example, it is reiterated over and over again in the writings of Jacob of Serug:

> The dispensation of the whole way of the Son of God / from the beginning was delineated by His Father in Adam and his household.[201]
>
> In all that concerns him Adam the older represented His images, / that is to say, the image and figure of His grace in their ways.[202]
>
> God had painted Adam and his household according to His Only-begotten (Son), / so that the image of His Son shall be over His creatures.[203]
>
> And he painted in Adam the whole image of the crucifixion.[204]

Another West-Syrian writer, the unknown author of the soghitha *On the Mother of God*, makes a similar claim – "In everything related to the first Adam the Adam from above has been demonstrated".[205] Although this work is ascribed to Ephrem, its later (probably 6th c.) West-Syrian origins are betrayed by the use of the epithet "mother of God" (ܐܡܗ ܐܠܗܐ and ܐܠܗܝܬ ܡܪܝܡ) in relation to Mary.[206]

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[201] *Homilies on Creation* I.57-58: ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐ ܒܝܕܝܗ ܫܠܡ ܐܒܘܗܬܗ ܒܪܝܫ ܫܪܝܪܐ ,ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܡܪܝܗ ܒܝ; ed. ALWAN 1989a, p. 4 [Syr.].

[202] *Homily on the Symbols, Types and Figures of Christ*: ܫܠܡ ܫܠ ܐܝ ܒܪܝܫ ܕܡܬܩܪܐ ,ܡܝܬ̈ܝܗܝܢ ܐܒܝ̈ܐ ܐܒܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ :ܡܐܢ ܕܒܝ; ed. BEDJAN 1905-1910, v. 3, p. 320, ln. 8-9.

[203] *Homilies against the Jews* I.87-88: ܒܪܝܫ ܫܪܝܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܕ ܒܪܝܫܝܬ ܒܐܝܩܘܢ ܫܠ ܡܝܬ ܐܒܐ ܕܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ; ed. ALBERT 1976, p. 48 [Syr.].

[204] *Homilies against the Jews* I.60: ܐܒܐ ܕܒܝ ܫܠ ܒܪܝܫ ܡ ܕ; ed. ALBERT 1976, p. 48 [Syr.].

[205] ܠܟ ܐܝ ܒܪܝܫ ,ܐܒܐ ܕܒܪ ܒܪܝܫ ;ܐܫܠܡ; ed. BECK 1959, p. 193 [Syr.].

[206] Cf. IBID., p. 194, #18, 20, p. 197, #41, p. 199, #50.

All these observations concerning the profound interest in the Adam-Christ typology exhibited by the author of CT lead us to the conclusion that in this aspect he stands much closer to the Alexandrian and, by extension, West-Syrian exegetical tradition, than to the Antiochene and East-Syrian.

f) CT and Ḥenana of Adiabene

The conspicuous discrepancy between the extensive use of the Adam-Christ typology in CT and its modest place in the East-Syrian exegetical tradition that was developed under the heavy influence of Theodore of Mopsuestia presents a considerable difficulty for those scholars who claim East-Syrian origins for CT. Recently, Alexander Toepel has tried to break out of this conundrum by suggesting that our work originated in the circle of Ḥenana of Adiabene, a famous East-Syrian theologian and exegete who was active during the second half of the sixth century.[207] In this section I would like to subject this hypothesis to a closer scrutiny.

Ḥenana was appointed as the head of the academy of Nisibis soon after the year 571. As a result of his unconventional position on Christology, as well as various innovations in the area of biblical exegesis, he soon became one of the most controversial figures in the history of East-Syrian scholasticism.[208]

Concerning his scriptural hermeneutics, it is known that Ḥenana tried to challenge the exclusive role taken in the East-Syrian scholarly curriculum by the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia with their stress on the literary meaning of texts and to make it more open to typological and allegorical exegesis, while drawing his inspiration primarily from Origen and John Chrysostom.

This greater openness of Ḥenana to figurative exegesis leads Toepel to suggest a connection between his approach to

[207] See TOEPEL 2006a, pp. 247-248.

[208] The most comprehensible account of Ḥenana's academic career as well as his exegetical activity is provided by VÖÖBUS 1965, pp. 234-317.

Scripture and that of the author of CT. However, no examples of an exegetical problem that would be treated in a similar way by these two authors are brought forward to substantiate this claim. Indeed, it is difficult to support as well as to refute Toepel's suggestion, since the lion's share of Ḥenana's *œuvre* is lost due to the strong resistance to his unorthodox views by the mainstream of the East-Syrian scholarly tradition. Unfortunately, only several liturgical treatises authored by him have survived in full.[209] With regard to our subject, especially regrettable is the loss of Ḥenana's *Commentary on Genesis*, mentioned in the catalogue of 'Abdīšō' of Nisibis.[210] Only systematic comparison of this work with CT would provide a definite answer to the question.

However, notwithstanding the scarcity of available material from Ḥenana's pen, there are several instances when the preservation of his opinions by the later East-Syrian exegetical tradition allows us to compare his exegetical approach with that of CT and, thus, to assess the probability of the scenario proposed by Toepel.

One such case is the way the two authors understand the "great dragons" (MT הַתַּנִּינִם הַגְּדֹלִים; Peshitta ܬܢܝܢܐ ܪܒ̈ܐ) of Genesis 1:21. According to the *Diyarbekir Commentary* on Genesis, Ḥenana interpreted this verse as referring to the "great serpents" (ܚ̈ܝܘܬܐ ܪܗܝܡ).[211] Contrary to that, the author of CT in the description of the monsters created during the fifth day follows the version of Peshitta, while adding to it the figures of Leviathan and Behemoth – ܠܘܝܬܢ ܪܒ̈ܐ ܪܗܝܡ ܘܒܗܡܘܬ ܚܝܠܐ (I.22 Or^{A}). The evident difference in the words used by the two authors makes any connection between them improbable in this particular case.

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209 They were published by SCHER 1911. Also, the collection of canons regulating life of the Nisibene academy preserves a number of rules introduced by Ḥenana; see VÖÖBUS 1962, pp. 91-102.

210 Ed. ASSEMANI 1719-1728, v. 3.1, p. 83.

211 Ed. VAN ROMPAY 1986, pp. 19 [Syr.], 26 [tr.].

In CT XXVIII.16-18, the claim of Abraham that Sarah is his "sister" (cf. Gen 20:2,5) is explained by introducing the figure of Terah's second wife, whom he took after the death of Abraham's mother and from whom Sarah was born.[212] Contrary to that, the genealogy of Sarah is handled in a different way by Ḥenana. According to the tradition preserved in the *Commentary on Genesis* by ʿAbdallah ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib, Ḥenana held the opinion that Sarah and Milcah were "sisters of Lot", i.e. daughters of Haran, Abraham's brother (cf. Gen 11:26-27).[213]

Moreover, according to Ḥenana's interpretation of the parable of the leaven (Mt 13:33), preserved by Īšōʿdād of Merv in book 10 of the *Commentary on Matthew*, the "three measures" refer to the three sons of Noah, from whom the nations and the tribes have sprung.[214] Apparently such a figurative understanding of Matthew 13:33 stands in contradiction with the basic genealogical scheme of our work, where Noah's progeny consists of four sons – Shem, Japheth, Ham and Yonṭon (cf. CT XIV.15; XXVII.7).

Of course, these cases of dissimilarity between CT and Ḥenana, when taken in isolation, cannot serve as an absolute proof of independence of the former from the latter. However, in my opinion, when considered together with the absence of any positive evidence of CT's dependence on Ḥenana's exegesis as well as with the cases of contrast between CT and East-Syrian exegetical tradition discussed above, they leave no sufficient ground for the hypothesis of Ḥenana's influence upon the author of CT.

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212 There is no agreement between the textual witnesses of CT about her name – in Or^{M} and Oc^{e} she is named ܟܢܝܬܐ; in Or^{AELOPSUV} – ܒܪܝܬܐ, in Or^{BCD} – ܒܪܝܬܐ, in Or^{F} – ܒܢܝܬܐ, in Or^{O} – ܒܝܬܐ, in Oc^{a} – ܟܙܒܬܐ.

213 وحنانا يقول هما اخوات لوط; ed. SANDERS 1967, p. 61, ln. 8 [Arab.].

214 ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܬܠܬ ܟܝܠܐ ܕܩܡܚܐ ܐܠܝܢ ܐܘܡܬܐ ܘܫܒܛܐ ܕܒܢܝ ܢܘܚ ܗܢ ܕܡܢܗܘܢ ܐܬܦܪܫܘ ܐܘܡܡܐ ܘܫܒܛܐ ; ed. GIBSON 1911-1916, v. 2, p. 99 [Syr.].

g) CT and Theodore of Mopsuestia

There is an additional aspect of the treatment of the Old Testament in CT that strengthens even further the claim of its dissimilarity vis-à-vis the East-Syrian exegetical tradition of the sixth-seventh centuries: the almost complete absence of the influence of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was a foundational figure in the history of East-Syrian exegesis during this period. The importance of Theodore for the development of the East-Syrian exegetical tradition can hardly be overestimated.[215] His proficiency as a scriptural exegete was widely recognized among the East-Syrians after his works were translated into Syriac during the first decades of the fifth century, and these works were studied in the schools of Edessa and, afterwards, of Nisibis. Theodore's supreme authority as "the exegete" (ܡܦܫܩܢܐ) reached its pinnacle after he had been formally recognized as such by the decisions of several East-Syrian synods (585 CE by Īšōʿyahb I; 596 CE by Sabrīšōʿ I; 605 CE by Gregory I), where a quasi-canonical status was conferred upon his writings. That it was not merely a lip service is confirmed by the fact that Theodore's impact is discernable in the works of virtually all East-Syrian writers who dealt with scriptural themes and issues, beginning with Narsai in the fifth century.

In light of all that, one might expect to find in CT at least some traces of Theodore's ideas, while claiming East-Syrian origins for this work. However, contrary to such expectation, we are faced with the absence of several themes which were important for East-Syrian theology from CT, themes that are deeply rooted in Theodore's thought and are distributed throughout the majority of the East-Syrian works from Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages.

The most telling example of this sort is, perhaps, the total absence from CT of the notion of God's pedagogical attitude towards his creation and, especially, the human race. This idea was, without doubt, one of the cornerstones of the East-Syrian theological tradition, whose scholastic values and imagery were

[215] See BECKER 2006, pp. 114-125; REININK 2009, pp. 239-240.

often projected back into the primeval history.[216] It is rooted in Theodore's conception of divine education (παιδεία), whose goal is to prepare humans in this *katastasis* of mortality for the future *katastasis* of immortality. The depiction or understanding of the primeval history and God's providential care for humanity as a process of education is found through the writings of most East-Syrian writers from Late Antiquity who dealt with the history of salvation, such as Narsai,[217] Cyrus of Edessa,[218] Thomas of Edessa,[219] Catholicos Giwargis I,[220] and the historiographer John bar Penkāyē.[221] This notion finds its most elaborate expression in the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* by Barḥadbešabbā 'Arbāyā, where the event of creation is interpreted as a reading lesson given by God to the angels, and the whole subsequent human history from Adam up to the author's days is represented as a succession of schools.[222] Emphasis on God's *paideia* is found also in the works of those authors who were influenced by the East-Syrian tradition, most notably Junilius Africanus[223] and Cosmas Indicopleustes, according to whom from the beginning to the end God leads human beings gradually through education and instruction to

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216 See on this MACINA 1982-1983; BECKER_2006, pp. 119-125; NORRIS 1963, pp. 166-168; GREER 1973, pp. 203-206; HAINTHALER 2002, pp. 257-261.

217 *Homilies on the Creation* III.328-333; IV.418-429; ed. GIGNOUX 1968, pp. 186-187, 218-219. See also Ibid., pp. 76-77.

218 Cf. *Explanation of the Passion* VII.3; *Explanation of the Resurrection* IV.3, VIII.1-8; *Explanation of Pentecost Sunday* IV.2-5; ed. MACOMBER 1974, pp. 92-93, 109-110, 121-124, 173-176 [Syr.]; 80-81, 96, 106-109, 153-156 [tr.]; see also MACOMBER 1964, pp. 18-22.

219 *De Nativitate* V; ed. CARR 1898, pp. 28-32 [Syr.]; 26-28 [tr.].

220 See his *Letter to Mina* in CHABOT 1902, pp. 230-231 [Syr.], 494-496 [tr.].

221 See REININK 2002.

222 See ed. SCHER 1908, pp. 348-393.

223 Cf. *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis* II.3, 7; ed. MAAS 2003, pp. 180-181, 184-185.

better things,[224] but also Jacob of Serug.[225] In my opinion, it is hardly conceivable that an East-Syrian writer from the sixth century would pass over this highly influential and widespread idea while dealing with biblical history.

Another important feature of Theodore's exegesis absent from CT is the notion of Adam having been created mortal in the beginning. According to Theodore, the original state of Adam could not be that of perfection and immortality, and he was supposed to attain the state of immortality only in the future, as a reward. Theodore explicitly states in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* that "Adam, the first among human beings, was mortal".[226] This view on the nature of Adam was shared by such representatives of the Antiochene and East-Syrian traditions from the fifth-sixth centuries as the anonymous author of the homily *On the Transgression of Adam*,[227] Narsai,[228] Cyrus of Edessa,[229] Babai the Great,[230] and Cosmas Indicopleustes.[231] As has been noted by Gerrit Reinink, Barḥadbešabbā's description of the "School of Paradise" also presupposes such an understanding of Adam's nature.[232] This anthropological position was officially affirmed as orthodox at the synod of 596 by the catholicos Sabrisho' I, who opposed the opinions of those claiming that "in the beginning the

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[224] Cf. *Topographia Christiana* V. 93; ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 2, pp. 138-139. Cf. also III.36-38, 48-49; V.64, 74.

[225] *Homilies against the Jews* IV.145-174; ed. ALBERT 1976, pp. 120-123, 135. Cf. HAINTHALER 2006, p. 82, who holds this to be another instance of Jacob's Edessene academic background.

[226] ; ed. VOSTE 1940, p. 78 [Syr.]. See on this JANSMA 1960, pp. 253-260; GIGNOUX 1968, pp. 488-495; MACOMBER 1964, pp. 18-28.

[227] See JANSMA 1960, pp. 165-172.

[228] *Homilies on the Creation* I.377-380; IV.45-58; ed. GIGNOUX 1968, pp. 130-131, 194-195.

[229] *Explanation of the Resurrection* IX.2-8; ed. MACOMBER 1974, pp. 124-127 [Syr.], 109-112 [tr.].

[230] *De unione* II.9; ed. VASCHALDE 1915, pp. 77-78 [Syr.], 62-63 [tr.].

[231] *Topographia Christiana* V.78-81; ed. WOLSKA-CONUS 1968-1973, v. 2, pp. 118-123.

[232] REININK 2009, p. 244, n. 81.

nature of Adam was not created mortal" (ܐܝܟ ܕܐܕܡ ܠܐ ܒܪܝܬ ܒܬܚܝܬ ܠܡܘܬ).[233]

In distinction from the East-Syrian mainstream, several West-Syrian authors held the opposite view, claiming that Adam was created immortal and lost this quality as a result of his transgression. This view is explicitly expressed by Philoxenus of Mabbug, who on several occasions speaks about Adam having been created immortal.[234] A similar position was taken also by Julian of Halicarnassus.[235] Later on, we find in Daniel of Ṣalaḥ's *Commentary on Psalms* the imagery of Adam being clothed with the robe of immortality and incorruption.[236]

Alongside these two diametrically opposed views on the original state of Adam, there was a middle-ground possibility, i.e. that Adam was created in an intermediate state, capable of becoming mortal as well as immortal, depending on his free will. In fact, this anthropological position was by far the oldest and most common among Syrian Christians before Theodore's theology began to take roots in the region. One finds it as early as the second century in Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autol.* II.24, 27) and Tatian (*Ad Graec.* 13), then later on in Ephrem (*In Gen.* II.17), in Nemesius of Emesa (*De nat. hom.* I.46), and, in the sixth century, in Jacob of Serug.[237]

As we turn to the portrayal of Adam in CT found in the main section dealing with the transgression of Adam and Eve, their fall is represented not in the terms of alteration of the ontological status of human nature from immortality to mortality, but through the imagery of the loss of the garments of glory, which is indigenous to Syriac Christianity.[238] The mention of death in connection with Adam's fall appears only tangentially in CT XLVIII.18, 22-23, where this event is

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[233] Ed. CHABOT 1902, p. 196 [Syr.].

[234] For the references, see DE HALLEUX 1963, pp. 494-495. Cf. also Babai the Great, *De unione* II.9.

[235] See DRAGUE 1924, pp. 124-125.

[236] See TAYLOR 2009, pp. 77-78.

[237] For the references and discussion, see ALWAN 1989b, pp. 24-31.

[238] On this notion, see BROCK 1982b.

typologically related to the death of Jesus on the cross. This usage of archaic metaphoric language makes it difficult to explicate with confidence the view held by our author on the pre-lapsarian nature of Adam. However, this language certainly sets him apart from the sixth-century East-Syrian authors, whose views were deeply influenced by Theodore's view on Adam's mortal nature before the fall.

Another indirect argument for discrepancy between CT and Theodore's position could be also found in the way CT's author describes the glorious appearance of Adam before the fall, as it was beheld by the angels (CT II.14):

> the appearance of his face burning with glorious beauty like the orb of the sun, and the light of his eyes like that of the sun, and the appearance of his body like the light of crystal.[239]

This description of Adam as an angelic or semi-divine being is hardly compatible with Theodore's view on the originally mortal nature of Adam and, thus, gives additional support to the claim of dissimilarity between the manner the author of CT presents Adam and the mainstream sixth-century East-Syrian thought on this subject.

2.3. History of the reception of CT

An additional line of inquiry that might throw some light on the milieu of CT's composition is based on the history of the work's reception. It would be reasonable to expect that the earliest examples of familiarity with CT would come from the circles close to its author. Pursuing this avenue, one has to pay particular attention to the two works written in Syriac where the earliest instances of acquaintance with CT are found, the

[239] Or^{A} – ܗܘ ܪܘܫܐ ܕܦܐܗ ܠܝܩܪܐ ܐ ܕ ܫܦܝܪ ,ܡܫܒܚ ܫܒܚ ܗܘ ܕܥܝܢܘܗܝ ܐ ܕ ܫܡܫܐ ,ܡܫܒܚ ܗܘ ܕܓܫܡܗ ܡܫܒܚ ܗܘ ܕܒܠܘܪ ܕܙܓܘܓܝܬܐ.

Pseudo-Dionysian cosmological tractate and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*.

a) Pseudo-Dionysian tractate

The date of this composition and its relation to CT have been discussed above. Although the work itself does not contain any explicit theologically charged remarks that would allow us to identify the religious affiliation of its author, there are several circumstantial arguments that speak in favor of its West-Syrian origins.

Thus, as the history of its reception seems to suggest, this work circulated among the West-Syrians, but not among the East-Syrians. For instance, it was known to the monk Severus, a West-Syrian compiler of a catena on the Old and New Testament from the ninth century.[240] In addition to that, the fact that this work is ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite also speaks in favor of the West-Syrian direction. Even if the thesis of Ernest Honigmann about the Miaphysite milieu of the original Pseudo-Dionysian corpus does not enjoy scholarly consensus, it is still significant that during the sixth century these writings were particularly popular among Miaphysites.[241] Thus, Severus of Antioch is the earliest known author who quotes these writings explicitly, whereas Sergius of Reshaina is the first who translated them into Syriac.[242] In distinction from that, it seems that the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus begins to be used by the East-Syrian writers only during the seventh century.[243] Accordingly, it does not seem very likely that during the sixth century an East-Syrian writer would use Dionysius as a pen name to propagate his ideas.

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[240] The relevant passage from *Catena Severi* has been published as an appendix in KUGENER 1907, pp. 165-166 [Syr.], 193-194 [tr.].

[241] See HONIGMANN 1952; his theory has been accepted later by VAN ESBROECK 1993.

[242] For the references and discussion, see ROREM & LAMOREAUX 1998, pp. 11-22. As the authors rightly point out, Chalcedonians made use of these writings as well during this period.

[243] See BECKER 2006, p. 178; BEULAY 2005.

b) Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius

Another composition that might provide some clue on the identity of the earliest readers of our work is the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, discussed above in connection with the date of CT. There are strong reasons to think that this composition was produced in a West-Syrian milieu. The main clue in that direction is that at some point the author of the *Apocalypse* polemicizes against those among his coreligionists who interpret Psalm 68:32 (68:31 in the Peshitta) as promising that deliverance from the Muslim yoke will be brought by "the kingdom of Cushites" (ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܕܟܘܫܝܐ).[244] Many scholars who have studied the *Apocalypse* consider this passage to be an indication of its West-Syrian provenance, since Ethiopia in the seventh century was still an important regional power whose official religion was Miaphysite Christianity.[245] Reinink, while noting the difficulties involved in the attempts to obtain an unambiguous answer to the question of the confessional affiliation of the author of the *Apocalypse*, sees nevertheless the West-Syrian provenance as the most plausible historical context for this work.[246] Sidney Griffith has expressed a similar opinion about the possible provenance of the *Apocalypse*,

[244] *Apocalypse* IX.7; ed. REININK 2003, p. 19 [Syr.].

[245] See ALEXANDER 1968, p. 1006; KRIVOV 1983, pp. 218-219. Lutz Greisiger has tried recently to challenge this theory by arguing that "Cush" of this passage should be understood as referring to the kingdom of Nubia and not to Axumite Ethiopia (see GREISIGER 2007). His argument, however, seems to be flawed, since (a) there are clear and unambiguous examples of the West-Syrian sources using "Cush" to refer to Axumite Ethiopia, as, for example, the *Book of Himyarites* (6th c.); ed. MOBERG 1924, p. 6 [Syr.]; (b) it would be more logical for Syriac Christians to imagine Ethiopia in the role of deliverer from the enemies of Christianity, as the memory of the Ethiopian military intervention on behalf of the Miaphysite (!) Christians of South Arabia, who were persecuted by Jews, was still fresh and perpetuated in historiography as well as in liturgy.

[246] See REININK 2003, p. 177, n. 166. Cf. also REININK 1992, pp. 159-161.

claiming that "the author was most likely a Jacobite."[247] While one might still argue that the problem of the *Apocalypse*'s ideological milieu has not yet been sufficiently solved, it is important for our discussion that no serious scholar has argued for the possibility of an East-Syrian origin for this text.

Against East-Syrian authorship of the *Apocalypse* is also the fact that one of the earliest Syriac writers who exhibits acquaintance with this text is the anonymous West-Syrian author of the so-called *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, another specimen of Syriac Christian apocalypticism that was produced in Edessa in the 690s.[248]

Finally, one could argue against East-Syrian provenance of the *Apocalypse* on the following basis. It seems that for the East-Syrian Christians the Arab takeover of the Middle East was not such a traumatic event as for the West-Syrians and Chalcedonians, especially at the initial stages of the conquest.[249] It is noteworthy that the author of the *Disputation between a Monk of the Monastery of Bet Ḥale and an Arab Notable*, an East-Syrian writer who was active in the first half of the eight century and who used the *Apocalypse* in his work, was apparently uncomfortable with the idea of the last Roman emperor who would destroy the Arab kingdom, an idea which is central for the *Apocalypse* and which was shared by other Edessene apocalyptic works. Passing over in silence this militant anti-Islamic notion, he promotes a de-politicized and non-conflicting message of the future kingdom of God that would be inherited only by Christians.[250] This omission might

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[247] GRIFFITH 2007, p. 34. It has to be noted, however, that Griffith does not rule out completely the possibility of Melkite provenance for the work.

[248] On the West-Syrian identity of this writer, see REININK 2008, p. 76, n. 5.

[249] On the initially good relations between East-Syrians and Muslims, see FIEY 1969-1970, pp. 30-32; Cf. also unusual for Christian sources positive references to Muḥammad in the *Chronicle* of John bar Penkāyē, a seventh-century East-Syrian writer; ed. MINGANA 1908, v. 2, pp. 141*, 146*; see also REININK 2008, p. 77, n. 10.

[250] See on this REININK 2008, pp. 85-86.

reflect the different perspectives on Islamic rule between the East-Syrian and West-Syrian Christians during the seventh-eighth centuries.

Taking all these considerations into account, it might be concluded that although it does not bring definitive proof, the use of CT by the authors of the Pseudo-Dionysian tractate and of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* strengthens the claim for a West-Syrian rather than for an East-Syrian provenance of this composition.

CONCLUSION

In order to obtain reliable information on the date of CT a wide range of evidence, internal as well as external, has been examined. As a result of this investigation, I have come to the conclusion that the most likely date for this work's composition is the span of time between the middle of the sixth century and the first decades of the seventh century.

With regard to the cultural and confessional milieu of CT's author, several important points have emerged. First, speaking in cultural terms, the most likely geographical location for our Syriac writer is the part of Northern Mesopotamia that was controlled by the Sasanian empire. This is supported by his profound interest in various aspects of Iranian culture and religiosity as well as his intimate knowledge of Iranian realities.[251] Second, several aspects of CT have led me to dismiss the theory of its East-Syrian origins as baseless. For example, the unsatisfactory textual basis of the distinctively East-Syrian polemical traditions that are found in CT has been demonstrated. Against this theory one should also consider the striking dissimilarity between the exegetical background of the author of CT and the East-Syrian exegetical tradition, as well as his closeness to the West-Syrian tradition. The latter observation, taken together with the presence of distinctively Miaphysite material in the best Eastern manuscripts of CT, as

[251] This aspect of CT is discussed in MINOV 2013a, Chapter 4.

well as the history of the work's reception, give us sufficient reason to claim a West-Syrian provenance for CT's author.

It seems that the attractiveness of the theory of the East-Syrian origins of CT is closely related to the commonly held presumption of the Iranian provenance of this work. Upon first impression, it may appear self-evident to suggest that if CT was produced by Syriac-speaking Christians of the Sasanian Empire, they most likely belonged to the East-Syrian Church, which comprised the largest ecclesiastical body in Persia during the sixth and seventh centuries. However, this view is undermined by the compelling evidence about the significant presence of the Syriac-speaking Miaphysite community in Sasanian Iran during this period, to the degree that by the time of CT's composition it constituted an important social and cultural force.[252]

The very beginnings of the West-Syrian presence in the Sasanian empire are related to the policy of mass deportations of the Byzantine Christian population undertaken by the Persians during their military campaigns against the Roman Empire.[253] Thus, in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (§58), John of Ephesus discusses the forced deportation of the citizens of Amida–including the Miaphysite monks of the monastery of Mar John of Amida–into Persia after the city was taken by the troops of Kavad in the year 501-502.[254]

Another important factor that facilitated significantly the growth of the West-Syrian community in Sasanian Iran was the persecution of Miaphysites in the Roman empire that was inaugurated by the emperor Justin I immediately after the death of his predecessor Anastasius I (r. 491-518), who was disposed favorably to the anti-Chalcedonian cause.[255] From that period on, one observes an influx of West-Syrian refugees

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[252] See on this LABOURT 1904, pp. 217-246; FIEY 1970, pp. 113-143; MORONY 1984, pp. 372-380.

[253] See KETTENHOFEN 1996; MORONY 2004.

[254] Ed. BROOKS 1923-1925, v. 3, pp. 217-220. It seems that they were settled in Arragan in the province of Fars; see FIEY 1960.

[255] See VASILIEV 1950, pp. 221-250.

in the territories controlled by Sasanians. For example, Elias, the author of the *Life of John of Tella*, relates how this sixth-century leader of the Miaphysite party fled to Persia, going into hiding in the mountains of Singar in Northern Mesopotamia, together with other Miaphysite refugees from the Roman empire.[256] Likewise, the East-Syrian author of the *Chronicle of Seert* (II.21), while discussing the beginnings of the Jacobite heresy in the Sasanian empire, mentions the West-Syrians, who fled into the Persian territory during the reign of Justin.[257]

As a result of these developments, from the middle of the sixth century on there is a growing number of testimonies of the activities of Miaphysite Christians in Sasanian Iran, especially in Northern Mesopotamia. The importance of the Miaphysite community of Persia finds a reflection in the establishment of the *maphrianate* in the year 628 in the city of Takrit, i.e. the "secondary" patriarchate that enjoyed an independent ecclesiastical authority in governing the West-Syrian Christians under Sasanian rule.[258] Some of the West-Syrian Christians of Sasanian Iran made their way up to the highest levels of Persian society and at times exercised a considerable degree of influence, as the examples of Shirin, the famous wife of the king Khusro II Parvīz (r. 590-628), and Gabriel of Singar, his court physician, demonstrate.[259]

There are two features that connect the author of CT with this particular faction of Syriac-speaking Christianity of Iran. One of them, discussed above, is the appearance in the best manuscripts of CT of the imagery characteristic of the radical Miaphysite Christology that might be espoused by some

[256] Ed. BROOKS 1907, pp. 60-62 [Syr.]. See also Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene, *Hist. eccl.* X.1; ed. BROOKS 1919-1924, v. 2, p. 175.

[257] Ed. SCHER 1908-1918, v. 3, p. 142.

[258] On this institution, see LABOURT 1904, pp. 236-241; FIEY 1974-1978.

[259] See on them LABOURT 1904, pp. 221-224; HUTTER 1998.

among the followers of Julian of Halicarnassus.[260] Presence of the Julianists in Northern Mesopotamia during the late Sasanian period is well-attested in ancient sources. Thus, the author of the West-Syrian *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (8th c.) relates under the years 548-549 how a certain Sergius, one of the Julianist bishops ordained by Eutropius, "rushed to Persia and to the land of the Ḥimyarites," where he had considerable success in recruiting followers.[261] In the *Life of John of Tella* we come across the mention of a Julianist monk, living on Mt Singar, who disclosed to the Persians the whereabouts of John.[262] In the letter which the West-Syrian patriarch of Antioch Sergius I (557-561) sent to the bishops of Persia, the hierarch addresses the canonical question of how to receive those who return to the orthodox fold from the "heresy of Julian the Phantasiast" (ܗܪܛܘܬܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܐ ܕܦܐܢܛܐܣܝܐ ܗܘ).[263] It is also noteworthy that George of Pisidia, a seventh-century Constantinopolitan poet who accompanied the emperor Heraclius during his counter-offensive against the Persians launched in the year 615 finds it necessary to attack "the error of Phantasiasts" (τῶν Φαντασιαστῶν ... τὴν πλάνην) in the poem describing this campaign.[264]

Another remarkable aspect of CT that connects this work with the West-Syrian milieu of Sasanian Mesopotamia is the peculiar polemical tradition found in CT XXX.12-13.[265] In this passage our author reproaches some unidentified "simpletons" (ܣܡܝܢ̈ܐ) for believing that the biblical Melchizedek was not a human being, but God, based on his description in Hebrews

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[260] That seems to be true in the case of the views regarding Jesus' circumcision that were current among Armenian Julianists. See on this KOFSKY 2013, p. 278.

[261] Ed. CHABOT 1927-1933, v. 2, p. 124; tr. HARRAK 1999, p. 122.

[262] Ed. BROOKS 1907, p. 67 [Syr.].

[263] Ed. VAN ROEY 1975-1976, pp. 218-219.

[264] *Expeditio Persica* I.149; ed. PERTUSI 1959, p. 91.

[265] This tradition is attested in the manuscripts Or^{AF} of the Eastern and all manuscripts of the Western recension and, thus, should be regarded as an integral part of the original stratum of CT.

7:3 as one "having neither beginning of days nor end of life". It is apparent from this description that the author of CT polemicizes here against the heterodox group known in the heresiographical sources of Late Antiquity under the name of "Melchizedekians". Attested as early as the third century, these Christians apparently regarded Melchizedek as a divine mediator figure, if one can trust the reports of their hostile adversaries.[266]

At some point this teaching made its appearance in Syria, where its earliest mention is connected with the name of certain John of Apamea, who was active during the fifth or early sixth century.[267] Of particular relevance for our discussion is the evidence provided by several Miaphysite sources, from which one infers that the Melchizedekians were present in Sasanian Mesopotamia during the sixth century and, moreover, were a cause for concern for the West-Syrians in this region.

The most important of these sources is the letter of Sergius I to the West-Syrian bishops of Persia, mentioned above. In the second question of this letter, the patriarch deals with the canonical problem of receiving those who turn back from the heresy of "Melchizedekians" (ܡܠܟܝܨܕܩܝܐ), characterized as those who hold the opinion that "Melchizedek is the Son of God" (ܡܠܟܝܨܕܩ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܡܠܟܝܨܕܩ).[268] To that, one may add the evidence of the encyclical letter sent by the Armenian Catholicos Komitas to the West-Syrian bishops of the Sasanian empire in the second decade of the seventh century, in which the heresy of Melchizedekians, who "called Melchizedek God," is anathematized.[269] The resurgence of Melchizedekian heresy in the late antique Near East during the sixth century finds an additional confirmation in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. While describing the ecclesiastical crisis that took place in Ethiopia,

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[266] Cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII.36.1; Epiphanius, *Panar.* IV.55.1-9. For more information on this group, see BARDY 1928; STORK 1928.

[267] See VAN REETH 2000.

[268] Ed. VAN ROEY 1975-1976, p. 220.

[269] See the French translation in VAN ESBROECK 2001, p. 169.

Ḥimyar and "India" due to Justinian's refusal to appoint non-Chalcedonian bishops there, the historiographer relates:

> Thus because of the lack of a bishop, there too another heresy was born. And the error [of the Melchizedekites, who presumptuously] claimed that Melchizedek himself was the Christ, established itself.[270]

The residual traces of the radical Miaphysite Christology and the polemic against the Melchizedekians in CT, as well as serious engagement with Judaism and Zoroastrianism, allow us to situate its author and his Syriac-speaking community within the multi-confessional milieu of Northern Mesopotamia, where such diverse religious groups as the East-Syrians, West-Syrians of Severian and Julianist persuasion, Melchizedekians, Jews and Zoroastrians, lived alongside each other during the late Sasanian period. Although we do not have enough information to establish with greater certainty the geographical context of our author, one can imagine it to be much like the region of Sinǧār Mountains, where most of these groups were represented during the sixth and seventh centuries.

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[270] Ed. CHABOT 1927-1933, v. 2, p. 112; tr. HARRAK 1999, p. 115. It has been suggested by Witold Witakowski, that the author of the *Chronicle* derived this information from the *Church History* of John of Ephesus; see WITAKOWSKI 1991, p. 266.

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